



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

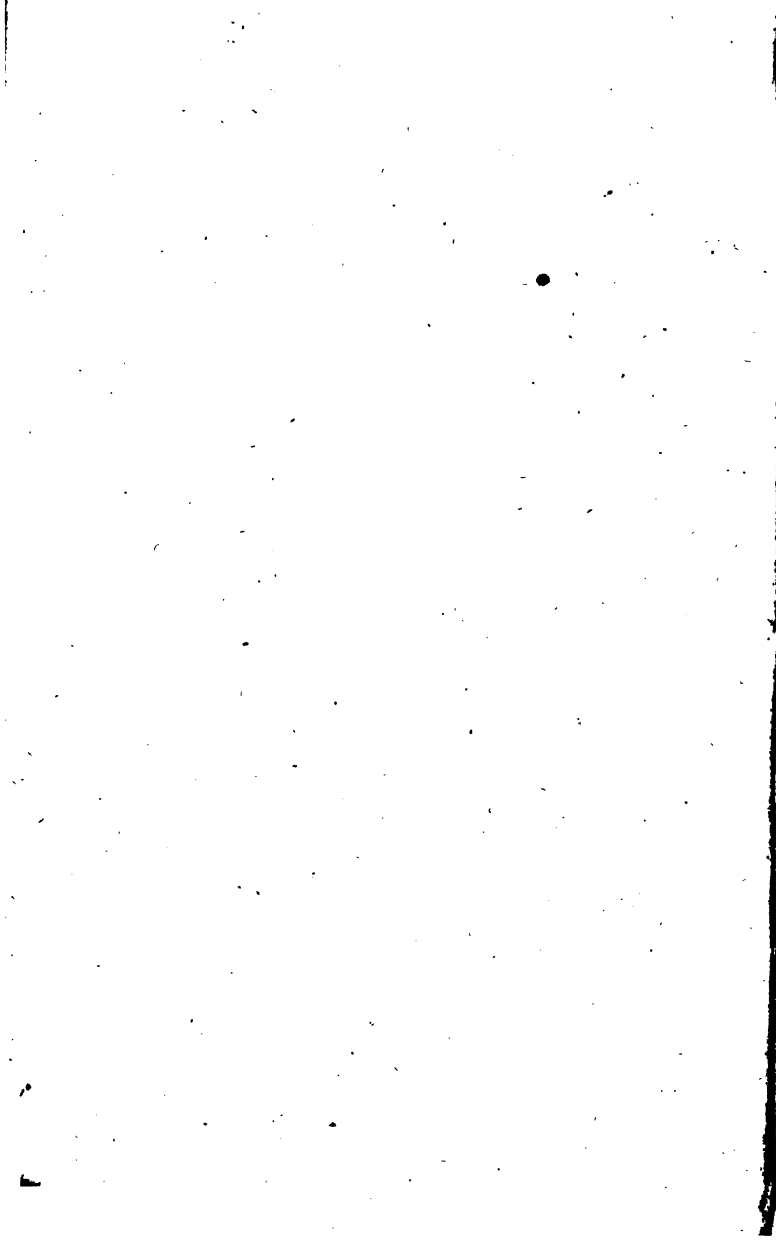
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



621116

ENGLISH
OXFORD
LIBRARY

Rac. E 84







CECILIA,

OR

MEMOIRS

OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

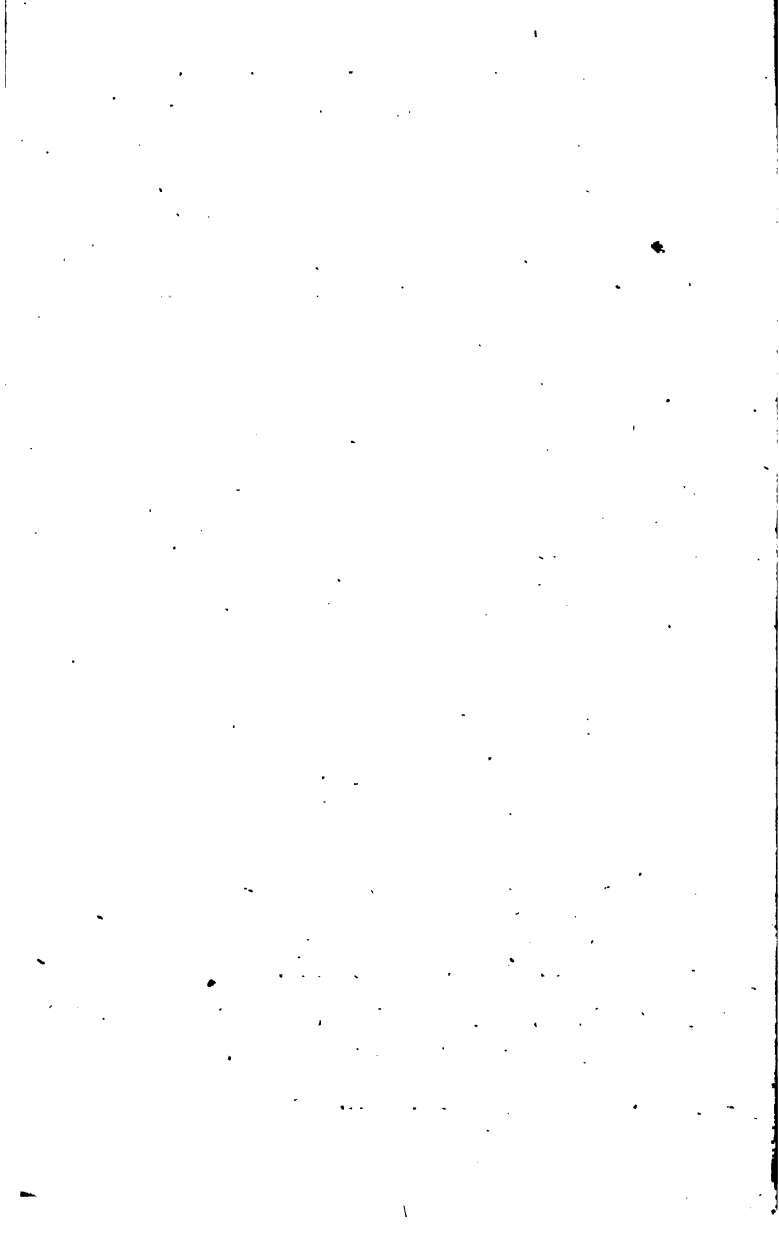
IN FIVE VOLUMES.

V O L. IV.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. PAYNE and SON at the Mews-
Gate, and T. CADELL in the Strand.

MDCCLXXXII.



CECILIA.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

A RENOVATION.

CECILIA was accompanied by her maid in the chaise, and her own servant and one of Mrs. Delvile's attended her on horseback.

The quietness of her dejection was soon interrupted by a loud cry among the men of "home! home! home!" She then looked out of one of the windows, and perceived Fidel, running after the carriage, and barking at the servants, who were all endeavouring to send him back.

Touched by this proof of the animal's gratitude for her attention to him, and conscious she had herself occasioned his master's leaving him, the scheme of Lady Honoria occurred to her, and she almost wished

to put it in execution, but this was the thought of a moment, and motioning him with her hand to go back, she desired Mrs. Delvile's man to return with him immediately, and commit him to the care of somebody in the castle.

This little incident, however trifling, was the most important of her journey, for she arrived at the house of Mrs. Charlton without meeting any other.

The sight of that lady gave her a sensation of pleasure to which she had long been a stranger, pleasure pure, unmixed, unaffected and unrestrained: it revived all her early affection, and with it, something resembling at least her early tranquillity: again she was in the house where it had once been undisturbed, again she enjoyed the society which was once all she had wished, and again saw the same scene, the same faces, and same prospects she had beheld while her heart was all devoted to her friends.

Mrs. Charlton, though old and infirm, preserved an understanding, which, whenever unbiaſſed by her affections, was sure to direct her unerringly; but the extreme softness of her temper frequently misſed her judgment, by making it, at the pleasure either of misfortune or of artifice, always yield to compassion, and pliant to entreaty. Where her counsel and opinion were demanded, they were certain to reflect honour
on

on her capacity and discernment; but where her assistance or her pity were supplicated, her purse and her tears were immediately bestowed, and in her zeal to alleviate distress she forgot if the object were deserving her solicitude, and stooped not to consider propriety or discretion, if happiness, however momentary, were in her power to grant.

This generous foible was, however, kept somewhat in subjection by the watchfulness of two grand-daughters, who, fearing the injury they might themselves receive from it, failed not to point out both its inconvenience and its danger.

These ladies were daughters of a deceased and only son of Mrs. Charlton; they were single, and lived with their grand-mother, whose fortune, which was considerable, they expected to share between them, and they waited with eagerness for the moment of appropriation; narrow-minded and rapacious, they wished to monopolize whatever she possessed, and thought themselves aggrieved by her smallest donations. Their chief employment was to keep from her all objects of distress, and in this though they could not succeed, they at least confined her liberality to such as resembled themselves; since neither the spirited could brook, nor the delicate support the checks and rebuffs from the grand-

A 3

daughters,

daughters, which followed the gifts of Mrs. Charlton. Cecilia, of all her acquaintance, was the only one whose intimacy they encouraged, for they knew her fortune made her superior to any mercenary views, and they received from her themselves more civilities than they paid.

Mrs. Charlton loved Cecilia with an excess of fondness, that not only took place of the love she bore her other friends, but to which even her regard for the Miss Charltons was inferior and feeble. Cecilia when a child had revered her as a mother, and, grateful for her tenderness and care, had afterwards cherished her as a friend. The revival of this early connection delighted them both, it was balm to the wounded mind of Cecilia, it was renovation to the existence of Mrs. Charlton.

Early the next morning she wrote a card to Mr. Monckton and Lady Margaret, acquainting them with her return into Suffolk, and desiring to know when she might pay her respects to her Ladyship. She received from the old lady a verbal answer, *when she pleased*, but Mr. Monckton came instantly himself to Mrs. Charlton's.

His astonishment, his rapture at this unexpected incident were almost boundless; he thought it a sudden turn of fortune in his own favour; and concluded, now she had

had escaped the danger of Delvile Castle, the road was short and certain that led to his own security.

Her satisfaction in the meeting was as sincere, though not so animated as his own; but this similarity in their feelings was of short duration, for when he enquired into what had passed at the castle, with the reasons of her quitting it, the pain she felt in giving even a cursory and evasive account, was opposed on his part by the warmest delight in hearing it: he could not obtain from her the particulars of what had happened, but the reluctance with which she spoke, the air of mortification with which she heard his questions, and the evident displeasure which was mingled in her chagrin, when he forced her to mention Delvile, were all proofs the most indisputable and satisfactory, that they had either parted without any explanation, or with one by which Cecilia had been hurt and offended.

He now readily concluded that since the fiery trial he had most apprehended was over; and she had quitted in anger the asylum she had sought in extacy, Delvile himself did not covet the alliance, which, since they were separated, was never likely to take place. He had therefore little difficulty in promising all success to himself.

She was once more upon the spot where she had regarded him as the first of men, he knew that during her absence no one had settled in the neighbourhood who had any pretensions to dispute with him that pre-eminence, he should again have access to her, at pleasure, and so sanguine grew his hopes, that he almost began to rejoice even in the partiality to Delvile that had hitherto been his terror, from believing it would give her for a time, that fullen distaste of all other connections, to which those who at once are delicate and fervent are commonly led by early disappointment. His whole sollicitude therefore now was to preserve her esteem, to seek her confidence, and to regain whatever by absence might be lost of the ascendant over her mind which her respect for his knowledge and capacity had for many years given him. Fortune at this time seemed to prosper all his views, and, by a stroke the most sudden and unexpected, to render more rational his hopes and his plans than he had himself been able to effect by the utmost craft of worldly wisdom.

The day following Cecilia, in Mrs. Charlton's chaise, waited upon Lady Margaret. She was received by Miss Bennet, her companion, with the most fawning courtesy; but when conducted to the lady of the house, she saw herself so evidently unwelcome,

come,

come, that she even regretted the civility which had prompted her visit.

She found with her nobody but Mr. Morrice, who was the only young man that could persuade himself to endure her company in the absence of her husband, but who, in common with most young men who are assiduous in their attendance upon old ladies, doubted not but he ensured himself a handsome legacy for his trouble.

Almost the first speech which her ladyship made, was "So you are not married yet, I find; if Mr. Monckton had been a real friend, he would have taken care to have seen for some establishment for you."

"I was by no means," cried Cecilia, with spirit, "either in so much haste or distress as to require from Mr. Monckton any such exertion of his friendship."

"Ma'am," cried Morrice, "what a terrible night we had of it at Vauxhall! poor Harrel! I was really excessively sorry for him. I had not courage to see you or Mrs. Harrel after it. But as soon as I heard you were in St. James's-Square, I tried to wait upon you; for really going to Mr. Harrel's again would have been quite too dismal. I would rather have run a mile by the side of a race-horse."

"There is no occasion for any apology,"

said Cecilia, " for I was very little disposed either to see or think of visitors."

" So I thought, ma'am;" answered he, with quickness, " and really that made me the less alert in finding you out. However, ma'am, next winter I shall be excessively happy to make up for the deficiency; besides, I shall be much obliged to you to introduce me to Mr. Delvile, for I have a great desire to be acquainted with him."

Mr. Delvile, thought Cecilia would be but too proud to hear it! However, she merely answered that she had no present prospect of spending any time at Mr. Delvile's next winter.

" True, ma'am, true," cried he; " now I recollect, you become your own mistress between this and then; and so I suppose you will naturally chuse a house of your own, which will be much more eligible."

" I don't think that," said Lady Margaret, " I never saw any thing eligible come of young women's having houses of their own; she will do a much better thing to marry, and have some proper person to take care of her."

" Nothing more right, ma'am!" returned he; " a young lady in a house by herself must be subject to a thousand dangers. What sort of place, ma'am, has Mr. Delvile got in the country? I hear he has

has a good deal of ground there, and a large house."

"It is an old castle, Sir, and situated in a park."

"That must be terribly forlorn: I dare say, ma'am, you were very happy to return into Suffolk."

"I did not find it forlorn; I was very well satisfied with it."

"Why, indeed, upon second thoughts, I don't much wonder; an old castle in a large park must make a very romantic appearance; something noble in it, I dare say."

"Aye," cried Lady Margaret, "they said you were to become mistress of it, and marry Mr. Delville's son: and I cannot, for my own part, see any objection to it."

"I am told of so many strange reports," said Cecilia, "and all, to myself so unaccountable, that I begin now to hear of them without much wonder."

"That's a charming young man, I believe," said Morrice; "I had the pleasure once or twice of meeting him at poor Harrel's, and he seemed mighty agreeable. Is not he so, ma'am?"

"Yes,—I believe so."

"Nay, I don't mean to speak of him as any thing very extraordinary," cried Morrice, imagining her hesitation proceeded

from dislike, "I merely meant as the world goes,—in a common sort of way."

Here they were joined by Mr. Monckton and some gentlemen who were on a visit at his house; for his anxiety was not of a sort to lead him to solitude, nor his disposition to make him deny himself any kind of enjoyment which he had power to attain. A general conversation ensued, which lasted till Cecilia ended her visit; Mr. Monckton then took her hand to lead her to the chaise, but told her, in their way out, of some alterations in his grounds, which he desired to shew her: his view of detaining her was to gather what she thought of her reception, and whether she had yet any suspicions of the jealousy of Lady Margaret; well knowing, from the delicacy of her character, that if once she became acquainted with it, she would scrupulously avoid all intercourse with him, from the fear of encreasing her uneasiness.

He began, therefore, with talking of the pleasure which Lady Margaret took in the plantations, and of his hope that Cecilia would often favour her by visiting them, without waiting to have her visits returned; as she was entitled by her infirmities to particular indulgencies. He was continuing in this strain, receiving from Cecilia hardly any answer, when suddenly from behind a thick

thick laurel bush, jumped up Mr. Morrice; who had run out of the house by a shorter cut, and planted himself there to surprise them.

"So ho!" cried he with a loud laugh, "I have caught you!" This will be a fine anecdote for Lady Margaret; I vow I'll tell her."

Mr. Monckton, never off his guard, readily answered "Aye, prithee do, Morrice; but don't omit to relate also what we said of yourself."

"Of me?" cried he, with some eagerness; "why you never mentioned me."

"O that won't pass, I assure you; we shall tell another tale at table by and by; and bring the old proverb of the ill luck of listeners upon you in its full force."

"Well, I'll be hanged if I know what you mean!"

"Why you won't pretend you did not hear Miss Beverley say you were the truest Ouran Outang, or man-monkey, she ever knew?"

"No, indeed, that I did not!"

"No? — Nor how much she admired your dexterity in escaping being horse-whipt three times a day for your incurable impudence?"

"Not a word on't! Horse-whipt! —

Miss

Miss Beverley, pray did you say any such thing?"

"Ay," cried Monckton, again, "and not only horse-*whipt*, but horse-*ponded*, for she thought when one had heated, the other might cool you; and then you might be fitted again for your native woods, for she insists upon it you was brought from Africa, and are not yet half tamed."

"O lord!" cried Morrice, amazed, "I should not have suspected Miss Beverley would have talked so!"

"And do you suspect she did now?" cried Cecilia.

"Pho, pho," cried Monckton, coolly, "why he heard it himself the whole time! and so shall all our party by and bye, if I can but remember to mention it."

Cecilia then returned to the chaise, leaving Mr. Monckton to settle the matter with his credulous guest as he pleased; for supposing he was merely gratifying a love of sport, or taking this method of checking the general forwardness of the young man, she forebore any interference that might mar his intention.

But Mr. Monckton loved not to be rallied concerning Cecilia, though he was indifferent to all that could be said to him of any other woman; he meant, therefore, to intimidate Morrice from renewing the subject;

ject; and he succeeded to his wish; poor Morrice, whose watching and whose speech were the mere blunders of chance, made without the slightest suspicion of Mr. Monckton's designs, now apprehended some scheme to render himself ridiculous, and though he did not believe Cecilia had made use of such expressions, he fancied Mr. Monckton meant to turn the laugh against him, and determined, therefore, to say nothing that might remind him of what had passed.

Mr. Monckton had at this time admitted him to his house merely from an expectation of finding more amusement in his blundering and giddiness, than he was capable, during his anxiety concerning Cecilia, of receiving from conversation of an higher sort.

The character of Morrice was, indeed, particularly adapted for the entertainment of a large house in the country; eager for sport, and always ready for enterprize; willing to oblige, yet tormented with no delicacy about offending; the first to promote mischief for any other, and the last to be offended when exposed to it himself; gay, thoughtless, and volatile, — a happy composition of levity and good-humour.

Cecilia, however, in quitting the house, determined not to visit it again very speedily;

ly; for she was extremely disgusted with Lady Margaret, though she suspected no particular motives of enmity, against which she was guarded alike by her own unsuspecting innocence, and by an high esteem of Mr. Monckton, which she firmly believed he returned with equal honesty of undersigning friendship.

Her next excursion was to visit Mrs. Harrel; she found that unhappy lady a prey to all the misery of unoccupied solitude: torn from whatever had, to her, made existence seem valuable, her mind was as listless as her person was inactive, and she was at a loss how to employ even a moment of the day: she had now neither a party to form, nor an entertainment to plan, company to arrange, nor dress to consider; and these, with visits and public places, had filled all her time since her marriage, which, as it had happened very early in her life, had merely taken place of girlish amusements, masters and governesses.

This helplessness of insipidity, however, though naturally the effect of a mind devoid of all genuine resources, was dignified by herself with the appellation of sorrow: nor was this merely a screen to the world; unused to investigate her feelings or examine her heart, the general compassion she met for the loss of her husband, persuaded

suaded her that indeed she lamented his destiny; though had no change in her life been caused by his suicide, she would scarcely, when the first shock was over, have thought of it again.

She received Cecilia with great pleasure; and with still greater, heard the renewal of her promises to fit up a room for her in her house, as soon as she came of age; a period which now was hardly a month distant.

Far greater, however, as well as infinitely purer, was the joy which her presence bestowed upon Mr. Arnott; she saw it herself with a sensation of regret, not only at the constant passion which occasioned it, but even at her own inability to participate in or reward it: for with him an alliance would meet with no opposition; his character was amiable, his situation in life unexceptionable: he loved her with the tenderest affection, and no pride, she well knew, would interfere to overpower it; yet, in return, to grant him her love, she felt as utterly impossible as to refuse him her esteem: and the superior attractions of Delville, of which neither displeasure nor mortification could rob him, shut up her heart, for the present, more firmly than ever, as Mr. Monckton had well imagined, to all other assailants.

Yet she by no means weakly gave way to repining or regret: her suspense was at an
end,

and, her hopes and her fears were subsided into certainty; Delvile, in quitting her, had acquainted her that he left her for ever, and even, though not, indeed, with much steadiness, had prayed for her happiness in union with some other; she held it therefore as essential to her character as to her peace, to manifest equal fortitude in subduing her partiality; she forebore to hint to Mrs. Charlton what had passed, that the subject might never be started; allowed herself no time for dangerous recollection; strolled in her old walks, and renewed her old acquaintance, and by a vigorous exertion of active wisdom, doubted not completing, before long, the subjection of her unfortunate tenderness. Nor was her task so difficult as she had feared; resolution, in such cases, may act the office of time, and anticipate by reason and self-denial, what that, much less nobly, effects through forgetfulness and inconstancy.

C H A P. II.

A V I S I T.

ONE week only, however, had yet tried the perseverance of Cecilia, when, while she was working with Mrs. Charlton in her dressing-room, her maid hastily entered it, and with a smile that seemed announcing welcome news, said, "Lord, ma'am, here's Fidel!" and, at the same moment, she was followed by the dog, who jumped upon Cecilia in a transport of delight.

"Good heaven," cried she, all amazement, "who has brought him? whence does he come?"

"A country man brought him, ma'am; but he only put him in, and would not stay a minute."

"But whom did he enquire for?—who saw him?—what did he say?"

"He saw Ralph, ma'am."

Ralph, then, was instantly called: and these questions being repeated, he said, "Ma'am, it was a man I never saw before; but he only bid me take care to deliver

liver the dog into your own hands, and said you would have a letter about him soon, and then went away: I wanted him to stay till I came up stairs, but he was off at once."

Cecilia, quite confounded by this account, could make neither comment nor answer; but, as soon as the servants had left the room, Mrs. Charlton entreated to know to whom the dog had belonged, convinced by her extreme agitation, that something interesting and uncommon must relate to him.

This was no time for disguise; astonishment and confusion bereft Cecilia of all power to attempt it; and, after a very few evasions, she briefly communicated her situation with respect to Delvilé, his leaving her, his motives, and his mother's evident concurrence: for these were all so connected with her knowledge of Fidel, that she led to them unavoidably in telling what she knew of him.

Very little penetration was requisite, to gather from her manner all that was united in her narrative of her own feelings and disappointment in the course of this affair: and Mrs. Charlton, who had hitherto believed the whole world at her disposal, and that she continued single from no reason but her own difficulty of choice,

was

was utterly amazed to find that any man existed who could withstand the united allurements of so much beauty, sweetness, and fortune. She felt herself sometimes inclined to hate, and at other times to pity him; yet concluded that her own extreme coldness was the real cause of his flight, and warmly blamed a reserve which had thus ruined her happiness.

Cecilia was in the extremest perplexity and distress to conjecture the meaning of so unaccountable a present, and so strange a message. Delvile, she knew, had desired the dog might follow him to Bristol; his mother, always pleased to oblige him, would now less than ever neglect any opportunity; she could not, therefore, doubt that she had sent or taken him thither, and thence, according to all appearances, he must now come. But was it likely Delvile would take such a liberty? Was it probable, when so lately he had almost exhorted her to forget him, he would even wish to present her with such a remembrance of himself? And what was the letter she was bid to expect? Whence and from whom was it to come?

All was inexplicable! the only thing she could surmise, with any semblance of probability, was that the whole was some frolic of Lady Honoria Pemberton, who had per-

persuaded Delvile to send her the dog, and perhaps assured him she had herself requested to have him.

Provoked by this suggestion, her first thought was instantly having him conveyed to the castle; but uncertain what the whole affair meant, and hoping some explanation in the letter she was promised, she determined to wait till it came, or at least till she heard from Mrs. Delvile, before she took any measures herself in the business. Mutual accounts of their safe arrivals at Bristol and in Suffolk, had already passed between them, and she expected very soon to have farther intelligence: though she was now, by the whole behaviour of Mrs. Delvile, convinced she wished not again to have her an inmate of her house, and that the rest of her minority might pass, without opposition, in the house of Mrs. Charlton.

Day after day, however, passed, and yet she heard nothing more; a week, a fortnight elapsed, and still no letter came. She now concluded the promise was a deception, and repented that she had waited a moment with any such expectation. Her peace, during this time, was greatly disturbed; this present made her fear she was thought meanly of by Mr. Delvile; the silence of his mother gave her apprehensions for

for his health, and her own irresolution how to act, kept her in perpetual inquietude. She tried in vain to behave as if this incident had not happened; her mind was uneasy, and the same actions produced not the same effects; when she now worked or read, the sight of Fidel by her side distracted her attention; when she walked, it was the same, for Fidel always followed her; and though, in visiting her old acquaintance, she forbore to let him accompany her, she was secretly planning the whole time the contents of some letter, which she expected to meet with, on returning to Mrs. Charlton's.

Those gentlemen in the country who, during the life-time of the Dean, had paid their addresses to Cecilia, again waited upon her at Mrs. Charlton's, and renewed their proposals. They had now, however, still less chance of success, and their dismissal was brief and decisive.

Among these came Mr. Biddulph; and to him Cecilia was involuntarily most civil, because she knew him to be the friend of Delvile. Yet his conversation encreased the uneasiness of her suspense; for after speaking of the family in general which she had left, he enquired more particularly concerning Delvile, and then added, "I am, indeed, greatly grieved to find,

by all the accounts I receive of him, that he is now in a very bad state of health."

This speech gave her fresh subject for apprehension; and in proportion as the silence of Mrs. Delville grew more alarming, her regard for her favourite Fidel became more partial. The affectionate animal seemed to mourn the loss of his master, and while sometimes she indulged herself in fancifully telling him her fears, she imagined she read in his countenance the faithfullest sympathy.

One week of her minority was now all that remained, and she was soon wholly occupied in preparations for coming of age. She purposed taking possession of a large house that had belonged to her uncle, which was situated only three miles from that of Mrs. Charlton; and she employed herself in giving orders for fitting it up, and in hearing complaints, and promising indulgencies, to various of her tenants.

At this time, while she was at breakfast one morning, a letter arrived from Mrs. Delville. She apologised for not writing sooner, but added that various family occurrences, which had robbed her of all leisure, might easily be imagined, when she acquainted her that Mortimer had determined upon again going abroad.

They were all, she said, returned to Delville-Castle,

Castle, but mentioned nothing either of the health of her son, or of her own regret, and filled up the rest of her letter with general news, and expressions of kindness: though, in a postscript, was inserted, "We have lost our poor Fidel."

Cecilia was still meditating upon this letter, by which her perplexity how to act was rather encreased than diminished, when, to her great surprise, Lady Honoria Pemberton was announced. She hastily begged one of the Miss Charltons to convey Fidel out of sight, from a dread of her raillery, should she, at last, be unconcerned in the transaction, and then went to receive her.

Lady Honoria, who was with her governess, gave a brief history of her quitting Delville-Castle, and said she was now going with her father to visit a noble family in Norfolk: but she had obtained his permission to leave him at the inn where they had slept, in order to make a short excursion to Bury, for the pleasure of seeing Miss Beverley.

"And therefore," she continued, "I can stay but half an hour; so you must give me some account of yourself as fast as possible."

"What account does your ladyship require?"

"Why, who you live with here, and
 VOL IV. B who

who are your companions, and what you do with yourself."

"Why, I live with Mrs. Charlton; and for companions, I have at least a score; here are her two grand-daughters, and Mrs. and Miss ——"

"Pho, pho," interrupted Lady Honoria, "but I don't mean such hum-drum companions as those; you'll tell me next, I suppose, of the parson, and his wife and three daughters, with all their cousins and aunts: I hate those sort of people. What I desire to hear of is, who are your particular favourites; and whether you take long walks here, as you used to do at the Castle, and who you have to accompany you?" And then, looking at her very archly, she added, "A pretty little dog, now, I should think, would be vastly agreeable in such a place as this.—Ah, Miss Beverley! you have not left off that trick of colouring, I see!"

"If I colour now," said Cecilia, fully convinced of the justness of her suspicions, "I think it must be for your ladyship, not myself; for, if I am not much mistaken, either in person, or by proxy, a blush from Lady Honoria Pemberton would not, just now, be wholly out of season."

"Lord," cried she, "how like that is to a speech of Mrs. Delvile's! She has

taught you exactly her manner of talking. But do you know I am informed you have got Fidel with you here? O fie, Miss Beverley! What will papa and mamma say, when they find you have taken away poor little master's play-thing?"

"And O fie, Lady Honoria! what shall *I* say, when I find you guilty of this mischievous frolic! I must beg, however, since you have gone thus far, that you will proceed a little farther, and send back the dog to the person from whom you received him."

"No, not I! manage him all your own way: if you chuse to accept dogs from gentlemen, you know, it is your affair, and not mine."

"If you really will not return him yourself, you must at least pardon me should you hear that *I* do in your ladyship's name."

Lady Honoria for some time only laughed and rallied, without coming to any explanation; but when she had exhausted all the sport she could make, she frankly owned that she had herself ordered the dog to be privately stolen, and then sent a man with him to Mrs. Charlton's.

"But you know," she continued, "I really owed you a spite for being so ill-natured as to run away after sending me

to call Mortimer to comfort and take leave of you."

"Do you dream, Lady Honoria? when did I send you?"

"Why you know you looked as if you wished it, and that was the same thing. But really it made me appear excessively silly, when I had forced him to come back with me, and told him you were waiting for him,—to see nothing of you at all, and not be able to find or trace you. He took it all for my own invention."

"And was it *not* your own invention?"

"Why that's nothing to the purpose; I wanted him to believe you sent me, for I knew else he would not come."

"Your ladyship was a great deal too good!"

"Why now suppose I had brought you together, what possible harm could have happened from it? It would merely have given each of you some notion of a fever and ague; for first you would both have been hot, and then you would both have been cold, and then you would both have turned red, and then you would both have turned white, and then you would both have pretended to simper at the trick; and then there would have been an end of it."

"This is a very easy way of settling it all," cried Cecilia laughing; "however,
you

you must be content to abide by your own theft, for you cannot in conscience expect I should take it upon myself."

"You are terribly ungrateful, I see," said her ladyship, "for all the trouble and contrivance and expence I have been at merely to oblige you, while the whole time, poor Mortimer, I dare say, has had his sweet Pet advertised in all the newspapers, and cried in every market-town in the kingdom. By the way, if you do send him back, I would advise you to let your man demand the reward that has been offered for him, which may serve in part of payment for his travelling expences."

Cecilia could only shake her head, and recollect Mrs. Delvile's expression, that her levity was incorrigible.

"O if you had seen," she continued, "how sheepish Mortimer looked when I told him you were dying to see him before he set off! he coloured so!—just as you do now!—but I think you're vastly alike."

"I fear, then," cried Cecilia, not very angry at this speech, "there is but little chance your ladyship should like either of us."

"O yes, I do! I like odd people of all things."

"Odd people? and in what are we so very odd?"

"O, in a thousand things. You're so good, you know, and so grave, and so squeamish."

"Squeamish? how?"

"Why, you know, you never laugh at the old folks, and never fly at your servants, nor smoke people before their faces, and are so civil to all the old *fograms*, you would make one imagine you liked nobody so well. By the way, I could do no good with my little Lord Derford; he pretended to find out I was only laughing at him, and so he minded nothing I told him. I dare say, however, his father made the detection, for I am sure he had not wit enough to discover it himself."

"Cecilia then, very seriously began to entreat that she would return the dog herself, and confess her frolic, remonstrating in strong terms upon the mischievous tendency and consequences of such inconsiderate flights.

"Well," cried she, rising, "this is all vastly true; but I have no time to hear any more of it just now; besides, it's only forestalling my next lecture from Mrs. Delvile, for you talk so much alike, that it is really very perplexing to me to remember which is which."

She then hurried away, protesting she had already outstayed her father's patience,

tience, and declaring the delay of another minute would occasion half a dozen expresses to know whether she was gone towards Scotland or Flanders.

This visit, however, was both pleasant and consolatory to Cecilia; who was now relieved from her suspense, and revived in her spirits by the intelligence that Delville had no share in sending her a present, which, from him, would have been humiliating and impertinent. She regretted, indeed, that she had not instantly returned it to the castle, which she was now convinced was the measure she ought to have pursued; but to make all possible reparation, she determined that her own servant should set out with him the next morning to Bristol, and take a letter to Mrs. Delville to explain what had happened, since to conceal it from any delicacy to Lady Honoria, would be to expose herself to suspicions the most mortifying, for which that gay and careless young lady would never thank her.

She gave orders, therefore, to her servant to get ready for the journey.

When she communicated these little transactions to Mrs. Charlton, that kind-hearted old lady, who knew her fondness for Fidel, advised her not yet to part with him, but merely to acquaint Mrs. Delville

where he was, and what Lady Honoria had done, and, by leaving to herself the care of settling his restoration, to give her, at least, an opportunity of offering him to her acceptance.

Cecilia, however, would listen to no such proposal ; she saw the firmness of Delvile in his resolution to avoid her, and knew that policy, as well as propriety, made it necessary she should part with what she could only retain to remind her of one whom she now most wished to forget.

C H A P. III.

AN INCIDENT.

THE spirits of Cecilia, however, internally failed her: she considered her separation from Delvile to be now, in all probability, for life, since she saw that no struggle either of interest, inclination, or health, could bend him from his purpose; his mother, too, seemed to regard his name and his existence as equally valuable, and the scruples of his father she was certain would be still more insurmountable. Her own pride, excited by theirs, made her, indeed, with more anger than sorrow, see this general consent to abandon her; but pride and anger both failed when she considered the situation of his health; sorrow, there, took the lead, and admitted no partner: it represented him to her not only as lost to herself, but to the world; and so sad grew her reflections, and so heavy her heart, that, to avoid from Mrs. Charlton observations which pained her, she stole into a summer-house in the garden the moment she had done tea, declining any companion but her affectionate Fidel.

Her tendernefs and her sorrow found here a romantic confolation, in complaining to him of the abfence of his mafter, his voluntary exile, and her fears for his health: calling upon him to participate in her sorrow, and lamenting that even this little relief would foon be denied her; and that in lofing Fidel no veftige of Mortimer, but in her own breaft, would remain; "Go, then, dear Fidel," ſhe cried, "carry back to your mafter all that nourifhes his remembrance! Bid him not love you the lefs for having ſome time belonged to Cecilia; but never may his proud heart be fed with the vain glory, of knowing how fondly for his ſake ſhe has cheriſhed you! Go, dear Fidel, guard him by night, and follow him by day; ſerve him with zeal, and love him with fidelity;—oh that his health were invincible as his pride!—there, alone, is he vulnerable——"

Here Fidel, with a loud barking, ſuddenly ſprang away from her, and, as ſhe turned her eyes towards the door to ſee what had thus ſtartled him, ſhe beheld ſtanding there, as if immoveable, young Delville himſelf!

Her aſtoniſhment at this ſight almoſt bereft her of her underſtanding; it appeared to her ſuper-natural, and ſhe rather believed it was his gholt than himſelf.

Fixed

Fixed in mute wonder, she stood still though terrified, her eyes almost bursting from their sockets to be satisfied if what they saw was real.

Delvile, too, was some time speechless; he looked not at her, indeed, with any doubt of her existence, but as if what he had heard was to him as amazing as to her what she saw. At length, however, tormented by the dog, who jumped up to him, licked his hands, and by his rapturous joy forced himself into notice, he was moved to return his caresses, saying, "*Yes, dear Fidel!* you have a claim indeed to my attention; and with the fondest gratitude will I cherish you ever!"

At the sound of his voice, Cecilia again began to breathe; and Delvile having quieted the dog, now entered the summer-house, saying, as he advanced, "Is this possible! —am I not in a dream?—Good God! is it indeed possible!"

The consternation of doubt and astonishment which had seized every faculty of Cecilia, now changed into certainty that Delvile indeed was present, all her recollection returned as she listened to this question, and the wild rambling of fancy with which she had incautiously indulged her sorrow, rushing suddenly upon her mind, she felt herself wholly overpowered by consciousness

and shame, and sunk, almost fainting, upon a window-seat.

Delville instantly flew to her, penetrated with gratitude, and filled with wonder and delight, which, however internally combated by sensations less pleasant, were too potent for controul, and he poured forth at her feet the most passionate acknowledgments.

Cecilia, surprised, affected, and trembling with a thousand emotions, endeavoured to break from him and rise; but, eagerly detaining her, "No, loveliest Miss Beverley," he cried, "not thus must we now part! this moment only have I discovered what a treasure I was leaving; and, but for Fidel, I had quitted it in ignorance for ever."

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, in the extreme agitation, "indeed you may believe me Fidel is here quite by accident.—Lady Honoria took him away,—I knew nothing of the matter,—she stole him, she sent him, she did every thing herself."

"O kind Lady Honoria!" cried Delville, more and more delighted, "how shall I ever thank her!—And did she also tell you to care for and to cherish him?—to talk to him of his master——"

"O heaven!" interrupted Cecilia, in an agony of mortification and shame, "to what has my unguarded folly reduced me!"

Then again endeavouring to break from him, "Leave me, Mr. Delvile," she cried, "leave me, or let me pass!—never can I see you more!—never bear you again in my sight!"

"Come, *dear Fidel!*" cried he, still detaining her, "come and plead for your master! come and ask in his name who *now* has a proud heart, whose pride *now* is invincible!"

"Oh go!" cried Cecilia, looking away from him while she spoke, "repeat not those hateful words, if you wish me not to detest myself eternally!"

"Ever-lovely Miss Beverley," cried he, more seriously, "why this resentment? why all this causeless distress? Has not *my* heart long since been known to you? have you not witnessed its sufferings, and been assured of its tenderness? why, then, this untimely reserve? this unabating coldness? Oh why try to rob me of the felicity you have inadvertently given me! and to sour the happiness of a moment that recompenses such exquisite misery!"

"Oh Mr. Delvile!" cried she, impatiently, though half softened, "was this honourable or right? to steal upon me thus privately—to listen to me thus secretly——"

"You blame me," cried he, "too soon; your own friend, Mrs. Charlton, permitted
me

me to come hither in search of you ;—then, indeed, when I heard the sound of your voice—when I heard that voice talk of *Fidel*—of his *master*——”

“ Oh stop, stop !” cried she ; “ I cannot support the recollection ! there is no punishment, indeed, which my own indiscretion does not merit,—but I shall have sufficient in the bitterness of self-reproach !”

“ Why will you talk thus, my beloved Miss Beverley ? what have you done,—what, let me ask, have *I* done, that such infinite disgrace and depression should follow this little sensibility to a passion so fervent ? Does it not render you more dear to me than ever ? does it not add new life, new vigour, to the devotion by which I am bound to you ?”

“ No, no,” cried the mortified Cecilia, who from the moment she found herself betrayed, believed herself to be lost, “ far other is the effect it will have ! and the same mad folly by which I am ruined in my own esteem, will ruin me in yours !—I cannot endure to think of it !—why will you persist in detaining me ?—You have filled me with anguish and mortification,—you have taught me the bitterest of lessons, that of hating and contemning myself !”

“ Good heaven,” cried he, much hurt,
“ what

" what strange apprehensions thus terrify you? are you with me less safe than with yourself? is it my honour you doubt? is it my integrity you fear? Surely I cannot be so little known to you; and to make protestations now, would but give a new alarm to a delicacy already too agitated.—Else would I tell you that more sacred than my life will I hold what I have heard, that the words just now graven on my heart, shall remain there to eternity unseen; and that higher than ever, not only in my love, but my esteem, is the beautiful speaker.—"

" Ah no!" cried Cecilia, with a sigh, " that, at least, is impossible, for lower than ever is she sunk from deserving it!"

" No," cried he, with fervour, " she is raised, she is exalted! I find her more excellent and perfect than I had even dared believe her; I discover new virtues in the spring of every action; I see what I took for indifference, was dignity; I perceive what I imagined the most rigid insensibility, was nobleness, was propriety, was true greatness of mind!"

Cecilia was somewhat appeased by this speech; and, after a little hesitation, she said, with a half smile, " Must I thank you for this good-nature in seeking to reconcile me with myself?—or shall I quarrel with
you

you for flattery, in giving me praise you can so little think I merit?"

"Ah!" cried he, "were I to praise as I think of you! were my language permitted to accord with my opinion of your worth, you would not then simply call me a flatterer, you would tell me I was an idolator, and fear at least for my principles, if not for my understanding."

"I shall have but little right, however," said Cecilia, again rising, "to arraign your understanding while I act as if bereft of my own. Now, at least, let me pass; indeed you will greatly displease me by any further opposition."

"Will you suffer me, then, to see you early to-morrow morning?"

"No, Sir; nor the next morning, nor the morning after that! This meeting has been wrong, another would be worse; in this I have accusation enough for folly;—in another the charge would be far more heavy."

"Does Miss Beverley, then," cried he gravely, "think me capable of desiring to see her for mere selfish gratification? of intending to trifle either with her time or her feelings? no; the conference I desire will be important and decisive. This night I shall devote solely to deliberation; to-morrow shall be given to action. Without
some

some thinking I dare venture at no plan; —I presume not to communicate to you the various interests that divide me, but the result of them all I can take no denial to your hearing."

Cecilia, who felt when thus stated the justice of his request, now opposed it no longer, but insisted upon his instantly departing.

"True," cried he, "I must go!—the longer I stay, the more I am fascinated, and the weaker are those reasoning powers of which I now want the strongest exertion." He then repeated his professions of eternal regard, besought her not to regret the happiness she had given him, and after disobeying her injunctions of going till she was seriously displeased, he only stayed to obtain her pardon, and permission to be early the next morning, and then, though still slowly and reluctantly, he left her.

Scarce was Cecilia again alone, but the whole of what had passed seemed a vision of her imagination. That Delville should be at Bury, that he should visit her at Mrs. Charlton's, surprise her by herself, and discover her most secret thoughts, appeared so strange and so incredible, that, occupied rather by wonder than thinking, she continued almost motionless in the place where he had left her, till Mrs. Charlton sent to request

request that she would return to the house. She then enquired if any body was with her, and being answered in the negative, obeyed the summons.

Mrs. Charlton, with a smile of much meaning, hoped she had had a pleasant walk : but Cecilia seriously remonstrated on the dangerous imprudence she had committed in suffering her to be so unguardedly surprised. Mrs. Charlton, however, more anxious for her future and solid happiness, than for her present apprehensions and delicacy, repented not the step she had taken ; and when she gathered from Cecilia the substance of what had past, unmindful of the expostulations which accompanied it, she thought with exultation that the sudden meeting she had permitted, would now, by making known to each their mutual affection, determine them to defer no longer a union upon which their mutual peace of mind so much depended. And Cecilia, finding she had been thus betrayed designedly, not inadvertently, could hardly reproach her zeal, though she lamented its indiscretion.

She then asked by what means he had obtained admission, and made himself known ; and heard that he had enquired at the door for Miss Beverley, and, having sent in his name, was shewn into the parlour,

hour, where Mrs. Charlton, much pleased with his appearance, had suddenly conceived the little plan which she had executed, of contriving a surprise for Cecilia, from which she rationally expected the very consequences that ensued, though the immediate means she had not conjectured.

The account was still unsatisfactory to Cecilia, who could frame to herself no possible reason for a visit so extraordinary, and so totally inconsistent with his declarations and resolutions.

This, however, was a matter of but little moment, compared with the other subjects to which the interview had given rise; Delville, upon whom so long, though secretly, her dearest hopes of happiness had rested, was now become acquainted with his power, and knew himself the master of her destiny; he had quitted her avowedly to decide what it should be, since his present subject of deliberation included her fate in his own: the next morning he was to call, and acquaint her with his decree, not doubting her concurrence which ever way he resolved.

A subjection so undue, and which she could not but consider as disgraceful, both shocked and afflicted her; and the reflection that the man who of all men she preferred,

preferred, was acquainted with her preference, yet hesitated whether to accept or abandon her, mortified and provoked her, alternately, occupied her thoughts the whole night, and kept her from peace and from rest.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

A PROPOSITION.

EARLY the next morning, Delvile again made his appearance. Cecilia, who was at breakfast with Mrs. and Miss Charltons, received him with the most painful confusion, and he was evidently himself in a state of the utmost perturbation. Mrs. Charlton made a pretence almost immediately for sending away both her granddaughters, and then, without taking the trouble of devising one for herself, arose and followed them, though Cecilia made sundry signs of sollicitation that she would stay.

Finding herself now alone with him, she hastily, and without knowing what she said, cried, "How is Mrs. Delvile, Sir? Is she still at Bristol?"

"At Bristol? no; have you never heard she is returned to Delvile-Castle?"

"O, true! — I meant Delvile-Castle, — but I hope she found some benefit from the waters?"

"She had not, I believe, any occasion to try them."

Cecilia,

Cecilia, ashamed of these two following mistakes, coloured high, but ventured not again to speak: and Delvile, who seemed big with something he feared to utter, arose, and walked for a few instants about the room; after which, exclaiming aloud "How vain is every plan which passes the present hour!" He advanced to Cecilia, who pretended to be looking at some work, and, seating himself next her, "when we parted yesterday," he cried, "I presumed to say one night alone should be given to deliberation, — and to-day, this very day to action! — but I forgot that though in deliberating I had only myself to consult, in acting I was not so independent; and that when my own doubts were satisfied, and my own resolutions taken, other doubts and other resolutions must be considered, by which my purposed proceedings might be retarded, might perhaps be wholly prevented!"

He paused, but Cecilia, unable to conjecture to what he was leading, made not any answer.

"Upon you, madam," he continued, "all that is good or evil of my future life, as far as relates to its happiness or misery, will, from this very hour, almost solely depend: yet much as I rely upon your goodness, and superior as I know you to trifling
or

or affectation, what I now come to propose—to petition—to entreat—I cannot summon courage to mention, from a dread of alarming you!”

What next, thought Cecilia, trembling at this introduction, is preparing for me! does he mean to ask *me* to solicit Mrs. Delville's consent! or from myself must he receive commands that we should never meet more!

“Is Miss Beverley,” cried he, “determined not to speak to me? Is she bent upon silence only to intimidate me? Indeed if she knew how greatly I respect her, she would honour me with more confidence.”

“When, Sir,” cried she, “do you mean to make your tour?”

“Never!” cried he, with fervour, “unless banished by *you*, never!—no, loveliest Miss Beverley, I can now quit you no more! Fortune, beauty, worth and sweetness I had power to relinquish, and severe as was the task, I compelled myself to perform it,—but when to these I find joined so attractive a softness,—a pity for my sufferings so unexpectedly gentle——no! sweetest Miss Beverley, I can quit you no more!” And then, seizing her hand, with yet greater energy, he went on, “I here,” he cried, “offer you my vows, I here own you sole arbitress of my fate! I give you not merely the possession of my heart,—that, indeed,
I had

I had no power to with-hold from you,—but I give you the direction of my conduct, I entreat you to become my counsellor and guide. Will Miss Beverley accept such an office? Will she deign to listen to such a prayer?”

“Yes,” cried Cecilia, involuntarily delighted to find that such was the result of his night’s deliberation, “I am most ready to give you my counsel; which I now do,—that you set off for the continent to-morrow morning.”

“O how malicious!” cried he, half laughing, “yet not so immediately do I even request your counsel; something must first be done to qualify you for giving it: penetration, skill and understanding, however amply you possess them, are not sufficient to fit you for the charge; something still more is requisite, you must be invested with fuller powers, you must have a right less disputable, and a title, that not alone, inclination, not even judgment alone must sanctify,—but which law must enforce, and rites the most solemn support!”

“I think, then,” said Cecilia, deeply blushing, “I must be content to forbear giving any counsel at all, if the qualifications for it are so difficult of acquirement.”

“Resent not my presumption,” cried he,

he, " my beloved Miss Beverley, but let the severity of my recent sufferings palliate my present temerity; for where affliction has been deep and serious, causeless and unnecessary misery will find little encouragement; and mine has been serious indeed! Sweetly, then, permit me, in proportion to its bitterness, to rejoice in the soft reverse which now flatters me with its approach."

Cecilia, abashed and uneasy, uncertain of what was to follow, and unwilling to speak till more assured, paused, and then abruptly exclaimed " I am afraid Mrs. Charlton is waiting for me," and would have hurried away: but Delville, almost forcibly preventing her, compelled her to stay; and, after a short conversation, on his side the most impassioned, and on hers the most confused, obtained from her, what, indeed, after the surprise of the preceding evening she could but ill deny, a frank confirmation of his power over her heart, and an ingenuous, though reluctant acknowledgment, how long he had possessed it.

This confession, made, as affairs now stood, wholly in opposition to her judgment, was torn from her by an impetuous urgency which she had not presence of mind to resist, and with which Delville, when particularly animated, had long been

accustomed to overpower all opposition. The joy with which he heard it, though but little mixed with wonder, was as violent as the eagerness with which he had sought it; yet it was not of long duration, a sudden, and most painful recollection presently quelled it, and even in the midst of his rapturous acknowledgements, seemed to strike him to the heart.

Cecilia, soon perceiving both in his countenance and manner an alteration that shocked her, bitterly repented an avowal she could never recall, and looked aghast with expectation and dread.

Delvile, who with quickness saw a change of expression in her of which in himself he was unconscious, exclaimed, with much emotion "Oh how transient is human felicity! How rapidly fly those rare and exquisite moments in which it is perfect! Ah! sweetest Miss Beverley, what words shall I find to soften what I have now to reveal! to tell you that, after goodness, candour, generosity such as yours, a request, a supplication remains yet to be uttered that banishes me, if refused, from your presence for ever!"

Cecilia, extremely dismayed, desired to know what it was: an evident dread of offending her kept him some time from proceeding, but at length, after repeatedly expressing

pressing his fears of her disapprobation, and a repugnance even on his own part to the very measure he was obliged to urge, he acknowledged that all his hopes of being ever united to her, rested upon obtaining her consent to an immediate and secret marriage.

Cecilia, thunderstruck by this declaration remained for a few instants too much confounded to speak; but when he was beginning an explanatory apology, she started up, and glowing with indignation, said, "I had flattered myself, Sir, that both my character and my conduct, independent of my situation in life, would have exempted me at all times from a proposal which I shall ever think myself degraded by having heard."

And then she was again going, but Delvile still preventing her, said "I knew too well how much you would be alarmed, and such was my dread of your displeasure that it had power even to embitter the happiness I sought with so much earnestness, and to render your condescension insufficient to ensure it. Yet wonder not at my scheme; wild as it may appear, it is the result of deliberation, and censurable as it may seem, it springs not from unworthy motives."

"Whatever may be your motives with respect to yourself, Sir," said Cecilia,

“ with respect to me they must certainly be disgraceful; I will not, therefore, listen to them.”

“ You wrong me cruelly,” cried he, with warmth, “ and a moment’s reflection must tell you that however distinct may be our honour or our disgrace in every other instance, in that by which we should be united, they must inevitably be the same: and far sooner would I voluntarily relinquish you, than be myself accessory to tainting that delicacy of which the un sullied purity has been the chief source of my admiration.”

“ Why, then,” cried Cecilia, reproachfully, “ have you mentioned to me such a project ? ”

“ Circumstances the most singular, and necessity the most unavoidable,” he answered, “ should alone have ever tempted me to form it. No longer ago than yesterday morning, I believed myself incapable of even wishing it; but extraordinary situations call for extraordinary resolutions, and in private as well as public life, palliate, at least, extraordinary actions. Alas! the proposal which so much offends you is my final resource! it is the sole barrier between myself and perpetual misery! — the only expedient in my power to save me from eternally parting with you! — for I am now cruelly compelled

pelled to confess, that my family, I am certain, will never consent to our union!"

"Neither, then, Sir," cried Cecilia, with great spirit, "will I! The disdain I may meet with I pretend not to retort, but wilfully to encounter, were meanly to deserve it. I will enter into no family in opposition to its wishes, I will consent to no alliance that may expose me to indignity. Nothing is so contagious as contempt! — The example of your friends might work powerfully upon yourself, and who shall dare assure me you would not catch the infection?"

"I dare assure you!" cried he; "hasty you may perhaps think me, and somewhat impetuous I cannot deny myself; but believe me not of so wretched a character as to be capable, in any affair of moment, of fickleness or caprice."

"But what, Sir, is my security to the contrary? Have you not this moment avowed that but yesterday you held in abhorrence the very plan that to-day you propose? And may you not to-morrow resume again the same opinion?"

"Cruel Miss Beverley! how unjust is this inference! If yesterday I disapproved what to-day I recommend, a little recollection must surely tell you why: and that not my opinion, but my situation is changed."

The conscious Cecilia here turned away her head; too certain he alluded to the discovery of her partiality.

“Have you not yourself,” he continued, “witnessed the steadiness of my mind? Have you not beheld me fly, when I had power to pursue, and avoid, when I had opportunity to seek you? After witnessing my constancy upon such trying occasions, is it equitable, is it right to suspect me of wavering?”

“But what,” cried she, “was the constancy which brought you into Suffolk? — When all occasion was over for our meeting any more, when you told me you were going abroad, and took leave of me for ever, — where, then, was your steadiness in this unnecessary journey?”

“Have a care,” cried he, half smiling, and taking a letter from his pocket, “have a care, upon this point, how you provoke me to shew my justification!”

“Ah!” cried Cecilia, blushing, “’tis some trick of Lady Honoria!”

“No, upon my honour. The authority is less doubtful: I believe I should hardly else have regarded it.”

Cecilia, much alarmed, held out her hand for the letter; and looking first at the end was much astonished to see the name of Biddulph. She then cast her eye over the begin-

beginning, and when she saw her own name, read the following paragraph.

"Miss Beverley, as you doubtless know, is returned into Suffolk; every body here saw her with the utmost surprize; from the moment I had heard of her residence in Delville-Castle, I had given her up for lost; but, upon her unexpected appearance among us again, I was weak enough once more to make trial of her heart. I soon found, however, that the pain of a second rejection *you* might have spared me, and that though she had quitted Delville-Castle, she had not for nothing entered it: at the sound of your name, she blushes; at the mention of your illness, she turns pale; and the dog you have given her, which I recollected immediately, is her darling companion. Oh happy Delville! yet so lovely a conquest you abandon.—"

Cecilia could read no more; the letter dropt from her hand: to find herself thus by her own emotions betrayed, made her instantly conclude she was universally discovered: and turning sick at the supposition, all her spirit forsook her, and she burst into tears.

"Good heaven," cried Delville, extremely shocked, "what has thus affected
C 4 you?

you? Can the jealous surmises of an apprehensive rival———”

“ Do not talk to me,” interrupted she, impatiently, “ and do not detain me, — I am extremely disturbed, —— I wish to be alone, — I beg, I even entreat you would leave me.”

“ I will go, I will obey you in every thing!” cried he, eagerly, “ tell me but when I may return, and when you will suffer me to explain to you all the motives of my proposal?”

“ Never, never!” cried she, with earnestness, “ I am sufficiently lowered already, but never will I intrude myself into a family that disdains me!”

“ Disdains? No, you are revered in it! who could disdain you! That fatal clause alone ——”

“ Well, well, pray leave me; indeed I cannot hear you; I am unfit for argument, and all reasoning now is nothing less than cruelty.”

“ I am gone,” cried he, “ this moment! I would not even wish to take advantage of your agitation in order to work upon your sensibility. My desire is not to surprise, but to reconcile you to my plan. What is it I seek in Miss Beverley? An Heiress? No, as such she has seen I could resist her; nor yet the light trifler of a spring
or

or two, neglected when no longer a novelty; no, no!—it is a companion for ever, it is a solace for every care, it is a bosom friend through every period of life that I seek in Miss Beverley! Her esteem, therefore, to me is as precious as her affection, for how can I hope her friendship in the winter of my days, if their brighter and gayer season is darkened by doubts of my integrity? All shall be clear and explicit; no latent cause of uneasiness shall disturb our future quiet: we will now be sincere, that hereafter we may be easy; and sweetly in unclouded felicity, time shall glide away imperceptibly, and we will make an interest with each other in the gaiety of youth, to bear with the infirmities of age, and alleviate them by kindness and sympathy. And then shall my soothing Cecilia —”

“O say no more!” interrupted she, softened in her own despite by a plan so consonant to her wishes, “what language is this! how improper for you to use, or me to hear!”

She then very earnestly insisted upon his going; and after a thousand times taking leave and returning, promising obedience, yet pursuing his own way, he at length said if she would consent to receive a letter from

him, he would endeavour to commit what he had to communicate to paper, since their mutual agitation made him unable to explain himself with clearness, and rather hurt his cause than assisted it, by leaving all his arguments unfinished and obscure.

Another dispute now arose; Cecilia protesting she would receive no letter, and hear nothing upon the subject; and Delvile impetuously declaring he would submit to no award without being first heard. At length he conquered, and at length he departed.

Cecilia then felt her whole heart sink within her at the unhappiness of her situation. She considered herself now condemned to refuse Delvile herself, as the only condition, upon which he even solicited her favour, neither the strictness of her principles, nor the delicacy of her mind, would suffer her to accept. Her displeasure at the proposal had been wholly unaffected, and she regarded it as an injury to her character ever to have received it; yet that Delvile's pride of heart should give way to his passion, that he should love her with so much fondness as to relinquish for her the ambitious schemes of his family, and even that darling name which so lately seemed annexed to his existence, were circumstances to which she was not insensible, and proofs of tenderness
and

and regard which she had thought incompatible with the general spirit of his disposition. Yet however by these she was gratified, she resolved never to comply with so humiliating a measure, but to wait the consent of his friends, or renounce him for ever.

C H A P. V.

A L T T E R.

AS soon as Mrs. Charlton was acquainted with the departure of young Delville, she returned to Cecilia, impatient to be informed what had passed. The narration she heard both hurt and astonished her; that Cecilia, the Heiress of such a fortune, the possessor of so much beauty, descended of a worthy family, and formed and educated to grace a noble one, should be rejected by people to whom her wealth would be most useful, and only in secret have their alliance proposed to her, she deemed an indignity that called for nothing but resentment, and approved and enforced the resolution of her young friend to resist all sollicitations which Mr. and Mrs. Delville did not second themselves.

About two hours after Delville was gone, his letter arrived. Cecilia opened it with trepidation, and read as follows.

To

TO MISS BEVERLEY.

September 20, 1779.

What could be the apprehensions, the suspicions of Miss Beverley when so earnestly she prohibited my writing? From a temper so unguarded as mine could she fear any subtlety of doctrine? Is my character so little known to her that she can think me capable of craft or duplicity? Had I even the desire, I have neither the address nor the patience to practise them; no, loveliest Miss Beverley, though sometimes by vehemence I may incautiously offend, by sophistry, believe me, I never shall injure: my ambition, as I have told you, is to convince, not beguile, and my arguments shall be simple as my professions shall be sincere.

Yet how again may I venture to mention a proposal which so lately almost before you had heard you rejected? Suffer me, however, to assure you it resulted neither from insensibility to your delicacy, nor to my own duty; I made it, on the contrary, with that reluctance and timidity which were given me by an apprehension that both seemed to be offended by it:—but alas! already I have said what with grief I must repeat, I have no resource, no alternative, between receiving the honour of your hand in secret or foregoing you for ever.

You will wonder, you may well wonder at such a declaration; and again that severe renunciation with which you wounded me, will tremble on your lips,—Oh there let it stop! nor let the air again be agitated with sounds so discordant!

In that cruel and heart-breaking moment when I tore myself from you at Delville-Castle, I confessed to you the reason of my flight, and I determined to see you no more. I named not to you, then, my family, the potency of my own objections against daring to solicit your favour rendering their's immaterial: my own are now wholly removed, — but their's remain in full force.

My father, descended of a race which though decaying in wealth, is unsubdued in pride, considers himself as the guardian of the honour of his house, to which he holds the name of his ancestors inseparably annexed: my mother, born of the same family, and bred to the same ideas, has strengthened this opinion by giving it the sanction of her own.

Such being their sentiments, you will not, madam, be surprised that their only son, the sole inheritor of their fortune, and sole object of their expectations, should early have admitted the same. Indeed almost the first lesson I was taught was that of reverencing the family from which I am descended,

scended, and the name to which I am born. I was bid consider myself as its only remaining support, and sedulously instructed neither to act nor think but with a view to its aggrandizement and dignity.

Thus, unchecked by ourselves, and uncontrouled by the world, this haughty self-importance acquired by time a strength, and by mutual encouragement a firmness; which Miss Beverley alone could possibly, I believe, have shaken! What, therefore, was my secret alarm, when first I was conscious of the force of her attractions, and found my mind wholly occupied with admiration of her excellencies! All that pride could demand, and all to which ambition could aspire, all that happiness could cover, or the most scrupulous delicacy exact, in her I found united; and while my heart was enslaved by her charms, my understanding exulted in its fetters.—Yet to forfeit my name, to give up for-ever a family which upon me rested its latest expectations,—Honour, I thought forbid it, propriety and manly spirit revolted at the sacrifice. The renunciation of my birth-right seemed a desertion of the post in which I was stationed: I forebore, therefore, even in my wishes, to solicit your favour, and vigorously determined to fly you as dangerous to my peace, because unattainable without dishonour.

Such

Such was the intended regulation of my conduct at the time I received Biddulph's letter; in three days I was to leave England; my father, with much persuasion, had consented to my departure; my mother, who penetrated into my motives, had never opposed it: but how great was the change wrought upon my mind by reading that letter! my steadiness forsook me, my resolution wavered; yet I thought him deceived, and attributed his suspicions to jealousy: but still, Fidel I knew was missing—and to hear he was your darling companion——was it possible to quit England in a state of such uncertainty? to be harrassed in distant climates with conjectures I might then never satisfy? No; I told my friends I must visit Biddulph before I left the kingdom, and promising to return to them in three or four days, I hastily set out for Suffolk, and rested not till I arrived at Mrs. Charlton's.

What a scene there awaited me! to behold the loved mistress of my heart, the opposed, yet resistless object of my fondest admiration, caressing an animal she knew to be mine, mourning over him his master's ill health, and sweetly recommending to him fidelity,——Ah! forgive the retrospection, I will dwell on it no longer. Little, indeed, had I imagined with what softness the
dignity

dignity of Miss Beverley was blended, though always conscious that her virtues, her attractions, and her excellencies, would reflect lustre upon the highest station to which human grandeur could raise her, and would still be more exalted than her rank, though that were the most eminent upon earth.—And had there been a thousand, and ten thousand obstacles to oppose my addressing her, vigourously and undauntedly would I have combated with them all, in preference to yielding to this single objection!

Let not the frankness of this declaration irritate you, but rather let it serve to convince you of the sincerity of what follows: various as are the calamities of life which may render me miserable, YOU only, among even its chosen felicities, have power to make me happy. Fame, honours, wealth, ambition, were insufficient without you; all chance of internal peace, and every softer hope is now centered in your favour, and to lose you, from whatever cause, ensures me wretchedness unmitigated.

With respect therefore to myself, the die is finally cast, and the conflict between bosom felicity and family pride is deliberately over. This name which so vainly I have cherished and so painfully supported, I now find inadequate to recompense me for the sacrifice

sacrifice which its preservation requires. I part with it, I own, with regret that the surrender is necessary; yet is it rather an imaginary than an actual evil, and though a deep wound to pride, no offence to morality.

Thus have I laid open to you my whole heart, confessed my perplexities, acknowledged my vain-glory, and exposed with equal sincerity the sources of my doubts, and the motives of my decision: but now, indeed, how to proceed I know not; the difficulties which are yet to encounter I fear to enumerate, and the petition I have to urge I have scarce courage to mention.

My family, mistaking ambition for honour, and rank for dignity, have long planned a splendid connection for me, to which though my invariable repugnance has stopt any advances, their wishes and their views immovably adhere. I am but too certain they will now listen to no other. I dread, therefore, to make a trial where I despair of success, I know not how to risk a prayer with those who may silence me by a command.

In a situation so desperate, what then remains? Must I make an application with a certainty of rejection, and then mock all authority by acting in defiance of it? Or, harder task yet! relinquish my dearest hopes
.....
when

when no longer persuaded of their impropriety? Ah! sweetest Miss Beverley, end the struggle at once! My happiness, my peace, are wholly in your power, for the moment of our union secures them for life.

It may seem to you strange that I should thus purpose to brave the friends whom I venture not to entreat; but from my knowledge of their characters and sentiments I am certain I have no other resource. Their favourite principles were too early imbibed to be now at this late season eradicated. Slaves that we all are to habits, and dupes to appearances, jealous guardians of our pride, to which our comfort is sacrificed, and even our virtue made subservient, what conviction can be offered by reason, to notions that exist but by prejudice? They have been cherished too long for rhetoric to remove them, they can only be expelled by all-powerful Necessity. Life is, indeed, too brief, and success too precarious, to trust, in any case where happiness is concerned, the extirpation of deep-rooted and darling opinions, to the slow-working influence of argument and disquisition.

Yet bigotted as they are to rank and family, they adore Miss Beverley, and though their consent to the forfeiture of their name might for-ever be denied, when once they beheld her the head and ornament of their house,

house, her elegance and accomplishments joined to the splendour of her fortune, would speedily make them forget the plans which now wholly absorb them. Their sense of honour is in nothing inferior to their sense of high birth; your condescension, therefore, would be felt by them in its fullest force, and though, during their first surprise, they might be irritated against their son, they would make it the study of their lives that the lady who for him had done so much, should never, through their means, repine for herself.

With regard to settlements, the privacy of our union would not affect them: one Confident we must unavoidably trust, and I would deposit in the hands of whatever person you would name, a bond by which I would engage myself to settle both your fortune and my own, according to the arbitration of our mutual friends.

The time for secrecy though painful would be short, and even from the altar, if you desired it, I would hasten to Delville-Castle. Not one of my friends should you see till they waited upon you themselves to solicit your presence at their house, till our residence elsewhere was fixed.

Oh loveliest Cecilia, from a dream of a hapiness so sweet awaken me not! from a plan of felicity so attractive turn not away!

If

If one part of it is unpleasant, reject not therefore all; and since without some drawback no earthly bliss is attainable, do not, by a refinement too scrupulous for the short period of our existence, deny yourself that delight which your benevolence will afford you, in snatching from the pangs of unavailing regret and misery, the gratefullest of men in the

humblest and most devoted

of your servants,

Mortimer Delvile.

Cecilia read and re-read this letter, but with a perturbation of mind that made her little able to weigh its contents. Paragraph by paragraph her sentiments varied, and her determination was changed: the earnestness of his supplication now softened her into compliance, the acknowledged pride of his family now irritated her into resentment, and the confession of his own regret now sickened her into despondence. She meant in an immediate answer to have written a final dismissal; but though proof against his entreaties, because not convinced by his arguments, there was something in the conclusion of his letter that staggered her resolution.

Thosé

Those scruples and that refinement against which he warned her, she herself thought might be overstrained, and to gratify unnecessary punctilio, the short period of existence be rendered causelessly unhappy. He had truly said that their union would be no offence to morality, and with respect merely to pride, why should that be spared? He knew he possessed her heart; she had long been certain of his, her character had early gained the affection of his mother, and the essential service which an income such as her's must do the family, would soon be felt too powerfully to make her connection with it regretted.

These reflections were so pleasant she knew not how to discard them; and the consciousness that her secret was betrayed not only to himself, but to Mr. Biddulph, Lord Ernolf, Lady Honoria Pemberton, and Mrs. Delvile, gave them additional force, by making it probable she was yet more widely suspected.

But still her delicacy and her principles revolted against a conduct of which the secrecy seemed to imply the impropriety. "How shall I meet Mrs. Delvile," cried she, "after an action so clandestine? How; after praise such as she has bestowed upon me, bear the severity of her eye, when she thinks I have seduced from her the obedience

dience of her son! A son who is the sole solace and first hope of her existence, whose virtues make all her happiness, and whose filial piety is her only glory! — And well may she glory in a son such as Delvile! Nobly has he exerted himself in situations the most difficult, his family and his ideas of honour he has preferred to his peace and health, he has fulfilled with spirit and integrity the various, the conflicting duties of life. Even now, perhaps, in his present application, he may merely think himself bound by knowing me no longer free, and his generous sensibility to the weakness he has discovered, without any of the conviction to which he pretends, may have occasioned this proposal!”

A suggestion so mortifying again changed her determination; and the tears of Henrietta Belfield, with the letter which she had surprized in her hand recurring to her memory, all her thoughts turned once more upon rejecting him for ever.

In this fluctuating state of mind she found writing impracticable; while uncertain what to wish, to decide was impossible. She disdained coquetry, she was superior to trifling, the candour and openness of Delvile had merited all her sincerity, and therefore while any doubt remained, with herself, she held it unworthy her character to tell him she had none.

Mrs. Charlton, upon reading the letter, became again the advocate of Delvile; the frankness with which he had stated his difficulties assured her of his probity, and by explaining his former conduct, satisfied her with the rectitude of his future intentions. "Do not, therefore, my dear child," cried she, "become the parent of your own misery by refusing him; he deserves you alike from his principles and his affection, and the task would both be long and melancholy to disengage him from your heart. I see not, however, the least occasion for the disgrace of a private marriage; I know not any family to which you would not be an honour, and those who feel not your merit, are little worth pleasing. Let Mr. Delvile, therefore, apply openly to his friends, and if they refuse their consent, be their prejudices their reward. You are freed from all obligations where caprice only can raise objections, and you may then, in the face of the world, vindicate your choice."

The wishes of Cecilia accorded with this advice, though the general tenour of Delvile's letter gave her little reason to expect he would follow it.

C H A P. VI.

A DISCUSSION.

THE day past away, and Cecilia had yet written no answer; the evening came, and her resolution was still unfixed. Delville, at length, was again announced; and though she dreaded trusting herself to his entreaties, the necessity of hastening some decision deterred her from refusing to see him.

Mrs. Charlton was with her when he entered the room; he attempted at first some general conversation, though the anxiety of his mind was strongly pictured upon his face. Cecilia endeavoured also to talk upon common topics, though her evident embarrassment spoke the absence of her thoughts.

Delville at length, unable any longer to bear suspense, turned to Mrs. Charlton, and said, "You are probably acquainted, madam, with the purport of the letter I had the honour of sending to Miss Beverley this morning?"

"Yes, Sir," answered the old lady,

Vol. IV.

D

"and

“ and you need desire little more than that her opinion of it may be as favourable as mine.”

Delvile bowed and thanked her; and looking at Cecilia, to whom he ventured not to speak, he perceived in her countenance a mixture of dejection and confusion, that told him whatever might be her opinion, it had by no means encreased her happiness.

“ But why, Sir,” said Mrs. Charlton, “ should you be thus sure of the disapprobation of your friends? had you not better hear what they have to say?”

“ I *know*, madam, what they have to say,” returned he; “ for their language and their principles have been invariable from my birth: to apply to them, therefore, for a concession which I am certain they will not grant, were only a cruel device to lay all my misery to their account.”

“ And if they are so perverse, they deserve from you nothing better,” said Mrs. Charlton; “ speak to them, however; you will then have done your duty; and if they are obstinately unjust, you will have acquired a right to act for yourself.”

“ To mock their authority,” answered Delvile, “ would be more offensive than to oppose it: to solicit their approbation, and then act in defiance of it, might justly pro-

provoke their indignation.—No; if at last I am reduced to appeal to them, by their decision I must abide.”

To this Mrs. Charlton could make no answer, and in a few minutes she left the room.

“And is such, also,” said Delvile, “the opinion of Miss Beverley? has she doomed me to be wretched, and does she wish that doom to be signed by my nearest friends!”

“If your friends, Sir,” said Cecilia, “are so undoubtedly inflexible, it were madness, upon any plan, to risk their displeasure.”

“To entreaty,” he answered, “they will be inflexible, but not to forgiveness. My father, though haughty, dearly, even passionately loves me; my mother, though high-spirited, is just, noble, and generous. She is, indeed, the most exalted of women, and her power over my mind I am unaccustomed to resist. Miss Beverley alone seems born to be her daughter——”

“No, no,” interrupted Cecilia, “as her daughter she rejects me!”

“She loves, she adores you!” cried he, warmly; “and were I not certain she feels your excellencies as they ought to be felt, my veneration for you *both* should even yet spare you my present supplication. But you would become, I am certain, the first

blessing of her life; in you she would behold all the felicity of her son,—his restoration to health, to his country, to his friends!”

“O Sir,” cried Cecilia, with emotion, “how deep a trench of real misery do you sink, in order to raise this pile of fancied happiness! But I will not be responsible for your offending such a mother; scarcely can you honour her yourself more than I do; and I here declare most solemnly——”

“O stop!” interrupted Delvile, “and resolve not till you have heard me. Would you, were she no more, were my father also no more, would you yet persist in refusing me?”

“Why should you ask me?” said Cecilia, blushing; “you would then be your own agent, and perhaps——”

She hesitated, and Delvile vehemently exclaimed, “Oh make me not a monster! force me not to desire the death of the very beings by whom I live! weaken not the bonds of affection by which they are endeared to me, and compel me not to wish them no more as the sole barriers to my happiness!”

“Heaven forbid!” cried Cecilia; “could I believe you so impious, I should suffer little indeed in desiring your eternal absence.”

“Why

"Why then only upon their extinction must I rest my hope of your favour?"

Cecilia, staggered and distressed by this question, could make no answer. Delvile, perceiving her embarrassment, redoubled his urgency; and before she had power to recollect herself, she had almost consented to his plan, when Henrietta Belfield rushing into her memory, she hastily exclaimed, "One doubt there is, which I know not how to mention, but ought to have cleared up;—you are acquainted with—you remember Miss Belfield?"

"Certainly; but what of Miss Belfield that can raise a doubt in the mind of Miss Beverley?"

Cecilia coloured, and was silent.

"Is it possible," continued he, "you could ever for an instant suppose—but I cannot even name a supposition so foreign to all possibility."

"She is surely very amiable?"

"Yes," answered he, "she is innocent, gentle, and engaging; and I heartily wish she were in a better situation."

"Did you ever occasionally, or by any accident, correspond with her?"

"Never in my life."

"And were not your visits to the brother *sometimes*——"

"Have a care," interrupted he, laughing,

“ lest I reverse the question, and ask if your visits to the sister were not *sometimes* for the brother ! But what does this mean ? Could Miss Beverley imagine that *after* knowing her, the charms of Miss Belfield could put me in any danger ?

Cecilia, bound in delicacy and friendship not to betray the tender and trusting Henrietta, and internally satisfied of his innocence by his frankness, evaded any answer, and would now have done with the subject; but Delvile, eager wholly to exculpate himself, though by no means displeased at an enquiry which shewed so much interest in his affections, continued his explanation.

“ Miss Belfield has, I grant, an attraction in the simplicity of her manners which charms by its singularity: her heart, too, seems all purity, and her temper all softness. I have not, you find, been blind to her merit; on the contrary, I have both admired and pitied her. But far indeed is she removed from all chance of rivalry in my heart ! A character such as hers for a while is irresistably alluring; but when its novelty is over, simplicity uninformed becomes wearisome, and softness without dignity is too indiscriminate to give delight. We sigh for entertainment, when cloyed by mere sweetness; and heavily drags on the load of life when the companion of our
social

social hours wants spirit, intelligence, and cultivation. With Miss Beverley all these——”

“Talk not of all these,” cried Cecilia, “when one single obstacle has power to render them valueless.”

“But now,” cried he, “that obstacle is surmounted.”

“Surmounted only for a moment! for even in your letter this morning you confess the regret with which it fills you.”

“And why should I deceive you? Why pretend to think with pleasure, or even with indifference, of an obstacle which has had thus long the power to make me miserable? But where is happiness without alloy? Is perfect bliss the condition of humanity? Oh if we refuse to taste it till in its last state of refinement, how shall the cup of evil be ever from our lips?”

“How indeed!” said Cecilia, with a sigh; “the regret, I believe, will remain eternally upon your mind, and she, perhaps, who should cause, might soon be taught to partake of it.”

“O Miss Beverley! how have I merited this severity? Did I make my proposals lightly? Did I suffer my eagerness to conquer my reason? Have I not, on the contrary, been steady and con-

siderate? neither biassed by passion nor betrayed by tenderness?"

"And yet in what," said Cecilia, "consists this boasted steadiness? I perceived it indeed, at Delville-Castle, but here——"

"The pride of heart which supported me there," cried he, "will support me no longer; what sustained my firmness, but your apparent severity? What enabled me to fly you, but your invariable coldness? The rigour with which I trampled upon my feelings I thought fortitude and spirit,—but I knew not then the pitying sympathy of Cecilia!"

"O that you knew it not yet!" cried she, blushing; "before that fatal accident you thought of me, I believe, in a manner far more honourable."

"Impossible! differently, I thought of you, but never better, never so well as now. I then represented you all lovely in beauty, all perfect in goodness and virtue; but it was virtue in its highest majesty, not, as now, blended with the softest sensibility."

"Alas!" said Cecilia, "how the portrait is faded!"

"No, it is but more from the life: it is the sublimity of an angel, mingled with all that is attractive in woman. But who is the friend we may venture to trust? To whom may I give my bond? And from whom

whom may I receive a treasure which for the rest of my life will constitute all its felicity?"

"Where can I," cried Cecilia, "find a friend, who, in this critical moment will instruct me how to act!"

"You will find one," answered he, "in your own bosom: ask but yourself this plain question; will any virtue be offended by your honouring me with your hand?"

"Yes; duty will be offended, since it is contrary to the will of your parents."

"But is there no time for emancipation? Am not I of an age to chuse for myself the partner of my life? Will not you in a few days be the uncontrolled mistress of your actions? Are we not both independant? Your ample fortune all your own, and the estates of my father so entailed they must unavoidably be mine?"

"And are these," said Cecilia, "considerations to set us free from our duty?"

"No, but they are circumstances to relieve us from slavery. Let me not offend you if I am still more explicit. When no law, human or divine, can be injured by our union, when one motive of pride is all that can be opposed to a thousand motives of convenience and happiness, why should we *both* be made unhappy, merely lest that pride should lose its gratification?"

This question, which so often and so angrily she had revolved in her own mind, again silenced her; and Delvile, with the eagerness of approaching success, redoubled his solicitations.

"Be mine," he cried, "sweetest Cecilia, and all will go well. To refer me to my friends is, effectually, to banish me for-ever. Spare me, then, the unavailing task; and save me from the resistless entreaties of a mother, whose every desire I have held sacred, whose wish has been my law, and whose commands I have implicitly, invariably obeyed! Oh generously save me from the dreadful alternative of wounding her maternal heart by a preremptory refusal, or of torturing my own with pangs to which it is unequal by an extorted obedience!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "how utterly impossible I can relieve you!"

"And why? once mine, irrevocably mine——"

"No, that would but irritate,—and irritate past hope of pardon."

"Indeed you are mistaken: to your merit they are far from insensible, and your fortune is just what they wish. Trust me, therefore, when I assure you that their displeasure, which both respect and justice will guard them from ever shewing you, will soon die wholly away. I speak not merely
from

from my hopes; in judging my own friends, I consider human nature in general. Inevitable evils are ever best supported. It is suspense, it is hope that make the food of misery; certainty is always endured, because known to be past amendment, and felt to give defiance to struggling."

"And can you," cried Cecilia, "with reasoning so desperate be satisfied?"

"In a situation so extraordinary as ours," answered he, "there is no other. The voice of the world at large will be all in our favour. Our union neither injures our fortunes, nor taints our morality: with the character of each the other is satisfied, and both must be alike exculpated from mercenary views of interest, or romantic contempt of poverty; what right have we, then, to repine at an objection which, however potent, is single? Surely none. Oh if wholly unchecked were the happiness I now have in view, if no foul storm sometimes lowered over the prospect, and for a moment obscured its brightness, how could my heart find room for joy so superlative? The whole world might rise against me as the first man in it who had nothing left to wish!"

Cecilia, whose own hopes aided this reasoning, found not much to oppose to it; and with little more of entreaty, and still less of

gument, Delvile at length obtained her consent to his plan. Fearfully, indeed, and with unfeigned reluctance she gave it, but it was the only alternative with a separation for-ever, to which she held not the necessity adequate to the pain.

The thanks of Delvile were as vehement as had been his entreaties, which yet, however, were not at an end; the concession she had made was imperfect, unless its performance were immediate, and he now endeavoured to prevail with her to be his before the expiration of a week.

Here, however, his task ceased to be difficult; Cecilia, as ingenuous by nature as she was honourable from principle; having once brought her mind to consent to his proposal, sought not by studied difficulties to enhance the value of her compliance: the great point resolved upon, she held all else of too little importance for a contest.

Mrs. Charlton was now called in, and acquainted with the result of their conference. Her approbation by no means followed the scheme of privacy; yet she was too much rejoiced in seeing her young friend near the period of her long suspense and uneasiness, to oppose any plan which might forward their termination.

Delvile then again begged to know what
male

male confident might be entrusted with their project.

Mr. Monckton immediately occurred to Cecilia; though the certainty of his ill-will to the cause made all application to him disagreeable: but his long and steady friendship for her, his readiness to counsel and assist her, and the promises she had occasionally made, not to act without his advice, all concurred to persuade her that in a matter of such importance, she owed to him her confidence, and should be culpable to proceed without it. Upon him, therefore, she fixed; yet finding in herself a repugnance insuperable to acquainting him with her situation, she agreed that Delville, who instantly proposed to be her messenger, should open to him the affair, and prepare him for their meeting.

Delville then, rapid in thought and fertile in expedients, with a celerity and vigour which bore down all objections, arranged the whole conduct of the business. To avoid suspicion, he determined instantly to quit her, and, as soon as he had executed his commission with Mr. Monckton, to hasten to London, that the necessary preparations for their marriage might be made with dispatch and secrecy. He purposed, also, to find out Mr. Belfield, that he might draw up the bond with which
he

he meant to entrust Mr. Monckton. This measure Cecilia would have opposed, but he refused to listen to her. Mrs. Charlton herself, though her age and infirmities had long confined her to her own house, gratified Cecilia upon this critical occasion with consenting to accompany her to the altar. Mr. Monckton was depended upon for giving her away, and a church in London was the place appointed for the performance of the ceremony. In three days the principal difficulties to the union would be removed by Cecilia's coming of age, and in five days it was agreed they should actually meet in town. The moment they were married Delville promised to set off for the Castle, while in another chaise, Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton's.

This settled, he conjured her to be punctual, and earnestly recommending himself to her fidelity and affection, he bid her adieu.

C H A P.

C H A P. VII.

A RETROSPECTION.

L EFT now to herself, sensations unfelt before filled the heart of Cecilia. All that had passed for a while appeared a dream; her ideas were indistinct, her memory was confused, her faculties seemed all out of order, and she had but an imperfect consciousness either of the transaction in which she had just been engaged, or of the promise she had bound herself to fulfil: even truth from imagination she scarcely could separate; all was darkness and doubt, inquietude and disorder!

But when at length her recollection more clearly returned, and her situation appeared to her such as it really was, divested alike of false terrors or delusive expectations, she found herself still further removed from tranquility.

Hitherto, though no stranger to sorrow, which the sickness and early loss of her friends had first taught her to feel, and which the subsequent anxiety of her own heart had since instructed her to bear, she had yet invariably possessed the consolation
of.

of self-approving reflections : but the step she was now about to take, all her principles opposed ; it terrified her as undutiful, it shocked her as clandestine, and scarce was Delvile out of sight, before she regretted her consent to it as the loss of her self-esteem, and believed, even if a reconciliation took place, the remembrance of a wilful fault would still follow her, blemish in her own eyes the character she had hoped to support, and be a constant allay to her happiness, by telling her how unworthily she had obtained it.

Where frailty has never been voluntary, nor error stubborn, where the pride of early integrity is unsubdued, and the first purity of innocence is inviolate, how fearfully delicate, how "tremblingly alive," is the conscience of man ! strange, that what in its first state is so tender, can in its last become so callous !

Compared with the general lot of human misery, Cecilia had suffered nothing ; but compared with the exaltation of ideal happiness, she had suffered much ; willingly, however, would she again have borne all that had distressed her, experienced the same painful suspense, endured the same melancholy parting, and gone through the same cruel task of combating inclination with reason, to have relieved her virtuous mind.

mind from the new-born and intolerable terror of conscientious reproaches.

The equity of her notions permitted her not from the earnestness of Delvile's entreaties to draw any palliation for her consent to his proposal; she was conscious that but for her own too great facility those entreaties would have been ineffectual, since she well knew how little from any other of her admirers they would have availed.

But chiefly her affliction and repentance hung upon Mrs. Delvile, whom she loved, revered and honoured, whom she dreaded to offend, and whom she well knew expected from her even exemplary virtue. Her praises, her partiality, her confidence in her character, which hitherto had been her pride, she now only recollected with shame and with sadness. The terror of the first interview never ceased to be present to her; she shrunk even in imagination from her wrath-darting eye, she felt stung by pointed satire, and subdued by cold contempt.

Yet to disappoint Delvile so late, by forfeiting a promise so positively accorded; to trifle with a man who to her had been uniformly candid, to waver when her word was engaged, and retract when he thought himself secure,—honour, justice and shame told her the time was now past.

“ And

“And yet is not this,” cried she, “placing nominal before actual evil? Is it not studying appearance at the expence of reality? If agreeing to wrong is criminal, is not performing it worse? If repentance for ill actions calls for mercy, has not repentance for ill intentions a yet higher claim?—And what reproaches from Delvile can be so bitter as my own? What separation, what sorrow, what possible calamity can hang upon my mind with such heaviness, as the sense of committing voluntary evil?”

This thought so much affected her, that, conquering all regret either for Delvile or herself, she resolved to write to him instantly, and acquaint him of the alteration in her sentiments.

This, however, after having so deeply engaged herself, was by no means easy; and many letters were begun, but not one of them was finished, when a sudden recollection obliged her to give over the attempt,—for she knew not whither to direct to him.

In the haste with which their plan had been formed and settled, it had never once occurred to them that any occasion for writing was likely to happen. Delvile, indeed, knew that her address would still be the same; and with regard to his own,

as his journey to London was to be secret, he purposed not having any fixed habitation. On the day of their marriage, and not before, they had appointed to meet at the house of Mrs. Roberts, in Fetter-Lane, whence they were instantly to proceed to the church.

She might still, indeed, enclose a letter for him in one to Mrs. Hill, to be delivered to him on the destined morning when he called to claim her; but to fail him at the last moment, when Mr. Belfield would have drawn up the bond, when a licence was procured, the clergyman waiting to perform the ceremony, and Delvile without a suspicion but that the next moment would unite them for ever, seemed extending prudence into treachery, and power into tyranny. Delvile had done nothing to merit such treatment, he had practised no deceit, he had been guilty of no perfidy, he had opened to her his whole heart, and after shewing it without any disguise, the option had been all her own to accept or refuse him.

A ray of joy now broke its way through the gloom of her apprehensions. "Ah!" cried she, "I have not, then, any means to recede! an unprovoked breach of promise at the very moment destined for its performance, would but vary the mode of acting

acting wrong, without approaching nearer to acting right!"

This idea for a while not merely calmed but delighted her; to be the wife of Delville seemed now a matter of necessity, and she soothed herself with believing that to struggle against it were vain.

The next morning during breakfast Mr. Monckton arrived.

Not greater, though winged with joy, had been the expedition of Delville to open to him his plan, than was his own, though only goaded by desperation, to make some effort with Cecilia for rendering it abortive. Nor could all his self-denial, the command which he held over his passions, nor the rigour with which his feelings were made subservient to his interest, in this sudden hour of trial, avail to preserve his equanimity. The refinements of hypocrisy, and the arts of insinuation, offered advantages too distant, and exacted attentions too subtle, for a moment so alarming; those arts and those attentions he had already for many years practised, with an address the most masterly, and a diligence the most indefatigable: success had of late seemed to follow his toils; the increasing infirmities of his wife, the disappointment and retirement of Cecilia, uniting to promise him a conclusion equally speedy and

happy;

happy ; when now, by a sudden and unexpected stroke, the sweet solace of his future cares, the long-projected recompence of his past sufferings, was to be snatched from him for-ever, and by one who, compared with himself, was but the acquaintance of a day.

Almost wholly off his guard from the surprise and horror of this apprehension, he entered the room with such an air of haste and perturbation, that Mrs. Charlton and her grand-daughters demanded what was the matter.

“ I am come,” he answered abruptly, yet endeavouring to recollect himself, “ to speak with Miss Beverley upon business of some importance.”

“ My dear, then,” said Mrs. Charlton, “ you had better go with Mr. Monckton into your dressing-room.”

Cecilia, deeply blushing, arose and led the way : slowly, however, she proceeded, though urged by Mr. Monckton to make speed. Certain of his disapprobation, and but doubtfully relieved from her own, she dreaded a conference which on his side, she foresaw, would be all exhortation and reproof, and on hers all timidity and shame.

“ Good God,” cried he, “ Miss Beverley, what is this you have done ? bound yourself

yourself to marry a man who despises, who scorns, who refuses to own you !”

Shocked by this opening, she started, but could make no answer.

“ See you not,” he continued, “ the indignity which is offered you ? Does the loose, the flimsy veil with which it is covered, hide it from your understanding, or disguise it from your delicacy ?”

“ I thought not,—I meant not,” said she, more and more confounded, “ to submit to any indignity, though my pride, in an exigence so peculiar, may give way, for a while, to convenience.”

“ To convenience ?” repeated he, “ to contempt, to derision, to insolence !”—

“ O Mr. Monckton !” interrupted Cecilia, “ make not use of such expressions ! they are too cruel for me to hear, and if I thought they were just, would make me miserable for life !”

“ You are deceived, grossly deceived,” replied he, “ if you doubt their truth for a moment : they are not, indeed, even decently concealed from you ; they are glaring as the day, and wilful blindness can alone obscure them.”

“ I am sorry, Sir,” said Cecilia, whose confusion, at a charge so rough, began now to give way to anger, “ if this is your opinion ; and I am sorry, too, for the liberty I have

have taken in troubling you upon such a subject."

An apology so full of displeasure instantly taught Mr. Monckton the error he was committing, and checking, therefore, the violence of those emotions to which his sudden and desperate disappointment gave rise, and which betrayed him into reproaches so unskilful, he endeavoured to recover his accustomed equanimity, and assuming an air of friendly openness, said, "Let me not offend you, my dear Miss Beverley, by a freedom which results merely from a solicitude to serve you, and which the length and intimacy of our acquaintance had, I hoped, long since authorised. I know not how to see you on the brink of destruction without speaking, yet, if you are averse to my sincerity, I will curb it, and have done."

"No, do not have done," cried she, much softened; "your sincerity does me nothing but honour, and hitherto, I am sure, it has done me nothing but good. Perhaps I deserve your utmost censure; I feared it, indeed, before you came, and ought, therefore, to have better prepared myself for meeting with it."

This speech completed Mr. Monckton's self-victory; it shewed him not only the impropriety of his turbulence, but gave him

room

room to hope that a mildness more crafty would have better success.

"You cannot but be certain," he answered, "that my zeal proceeds wholly from a desire to be of use to you: my knowledge of the world might possibly, I thought, assist your inexperience, and the disinterestedness of my regard, might enable me to see and to point out the dangers to which you are exposed, from artifice and duplicity in those who have other purposes to answer than what simply belong to your welfare."

"Neither artifice nor duplicity," cried Cecilia, jealous for the honour of Delvile, "have been practised against me. Argument, and not persuasion, determined me; and if I have done wrong—those who prompted me have erred as unwittingly as myself."

"You are too generous to perceive the difference, or you would find nothing less alike. If, however, my plainness will not offend you, before it is quite too late, I will point out to you a few of the evils,—for there are some I cannot even mention, which at this instant do not merely threaten, but await you."

Cecilia started at this terrifying offer, and afraid to accept, yet ashamed to refuse it, hung back irresolute.

"I see

"I see," said Mr. Monckton, after a pause of some continuance, "your determination admits no appeal. The consequence must, indeed, be all your own; but I am greatly grieved to find how little you are aware of its seriousness. Hereafter you will wish, perhaps, that the friend of your earliest youth had been permitted to advise you; at present you only think him officious and impertinent, and therefore he can do nothing you will be so likely to approve as quitting you. I wish you, then, greater happiness than seems prepared to follow you, and a counsellor more prosperous in offering his assistance."

He would then have taken his leave: but Cecilia called out, "Oh, Mr. Monckton! do you then give me up?"

"Not unless you wish it."

"Alas, I know not what to wish! except, indeed, the restoration of that security from self-blame, which till yesterday, even in the midst of disappointment, quieted and consoled me."

"Are you, then, sensible you have gone wrong, yet resolute not to turn back?"

"Could I tell, could I see," cried she, with energy, "which way I ought to turn, not a moment would I hesitate how to act! my heart should have no power, my happiness no choice,—I would recover my

own esteem by any sacrifice that could be made!"

"What, then, can possibly be your doubt? To be as you were yesterday what is wanting but your own inclination?"

"Every thing is wanting; right, honour, firmness, all by which the just are bound, and all which the conscientious hold sacred!"

"These scruples are merely romantic; your own good sense, had it fairer play, would condemn them; but it is warped at present by prejudice and prepossession."

"No, indeed!" cried she, colouring at the charge, "I may have entered too precipitately into an engagement I ought to have avoided, but it is weakness of judgment, not of heart, that disables me from retrieving my error."

"Yet you will neither hear whither it may lead you, nor which way you may escape from it?"

"Yes, Sir," cried she, trembling, "I am now ready to hear both."

"Briefly, then, I will tell you. It will lead you into a family of which every individual will disdain you; it will make you inmate of an house of which no other inmate will associate with you; you will be insulted as an inferior, and reproached as an intruder; your birth will be a subject of ridicule,

ridicule, and your whole race only named with derision: and while the elders of the proud castle treat you with open contempt, the man for whom you suffer will not dare to support you."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Cecilia, with the most angry emotion; "this whole representation is exaggerated, and the latter part is utterly without foundation."

"The latter part," said Mr. Monckton, "is of all other least disputable: the man who now dares not own, will then never venture to defend you. On the contrary, to make peace for himself, he will be the first to neglect you. The ruined estates of his ancestors will be repaired by your fortune, while the name which you carry into his family will be constantly resented as an injury: you will thus be plundered though you are scorned, and told to consider yourself honoured that they condescend to make use of you! nor here rests the evil of a forced connection with so much arrogance,—even your children, should you have any, will be educated to despise you!"

"Dreadful and horrible!" cried Cecilia;—"I can hear no more,—Oh, Mr. Monckton, what a prospect have you opened to my view!"

"Fly from it, then, while it is yet in

your power,—when two paths are before you, chuse not that which leads to destruction; send instantly after Delville, and tell him you have recovered your senses.”

“ I would long since have sent,—I wanted not a representation such as this,—but I know not how to direct to him, nor whither he is gone.”

“ All art and baseness to prevent your recantation !”

“ No, Sir, no,” cried she, with quickness; “ whatever may be the truth of your painting in general, all that concerns——”

Asbamed of the vindication she intended, which yet in her own mind was firm and animated, she stopt, and left the sentence unfinished.

“ In what place were you to meet ?” said Mr. Monckton; “ you can at least send to him there.”

“ We were only to have met,” answered she, in much confusion, “ at the last moment,—and that would be too late—it would be too—I could not, without some previous notice, break a promise which I gave without any restriction.”

“ Is this your only objection ?”

“ It is: but it is one which I cannot conquer.”

“ Then you would give up this ill-boding

boding connection, but from notions of delicacy with regard to the time?"

"Indeed I meant it, before you came."

"I, then, will obviate this objection: give me but the commission, either verbally or in writing, and I will undertake to find him out, and deliver it before night."

Cecilia, little expecting this offer, turned extremely pale, and after pausing some moments, said in a faltering voice, "What, then, Sir, is your advice, in what manner——"

"I will say to him all that is necessary; trust the matter with me."

"No,—he deserves, at least, an apology from myself,—though how to make it——"

She stopt, she hesitated, she went out of the room for pen and ink, she returned without them, and the agitation of her mind every instant encreasing, she begged him, in a faint voice, to excuse her while she consulted with Mrs. Charlton, and promising to wait upon him again, was hurrying away.

Mr. Monckton, however, saw too great danger in so much emotion to trust her out of his sight: he told her, therefore, that she would only encrease her perplexity, without reaping any advantage, by an application to Mrs. Charlton, and that if she was really sincere in wishing to recede,

there was not a moment to be lost, and Delville should immediately be pursued.

Cecilia, sensible of the truth of this speech, and once more recollecting the unaffected earnestness with which but an hour or two before, she had herself desired to renounce this engagement, now summoned her utmost courage to her aid, and, after a short, but painful struggle, determined to act consistently with her professions and her character, and, by one great and final effort, to conclude all her doubts, and try to silence even her regret, by completing the triumph of fortitude over inclination.

She called, therefore, for pen and ink, and without venturing herself from the room, wrote the following letter.

TO MORTIMER DELVILLE, Esq.

Accuse me not of caprice, and pardon my irresolution, when you find me shrinking with terror from the promise I have made, and no longer either able or willing to perform it. The reproaches of your family I should very ill endure; but the reproaches of my own heart for an action I can neither approve nor defend, would be still more oppressive. With such a weight upon the mind length of life would be burthenome; with a sensation of guilt early death

death would be terrific! These being my notions of the engagement into which we have entered, you cannot wonder, and you have still less reason to repine, that I dare not fulfil it. Alas! where would be your chance of happiness with one who in the very act of becoming yours would forfeit her own!

I blush at this tardy recantation, and I grieve at the disappointment it may occasion you: but I have yielded to the exhortations of an inward monitor, who is never to be neglected with impunity. Consult him yourself; and I shall need no other advocate.

Adieu, and may all felicity attend you! if to hear of the almost total privation of mine, will mitigate the resentment with which you will probably read this letter, it may be mitigated but too easily! Yet my consent to a clandestine action shall never be repeated; and though I confess to you I am not happy, I solemnly declare my resolution is unalterable. A little reflection will tell you I am right, though a great deal of lenity may scarce suffice to make you pardon my being right no sooner.

C. B.

This letter, which with trembling haste, resulting from a fear of her own steadiness,

she folded and sealed, Mr. Monckton, from the same apprehension, yet more eagerly received, and scarce waiting to bid her good morning, mounted his horse, and pursued his way to London.

Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton to acquaint her with what had passed: and notwithstanding the sorrow she felt in apparently injuring the man whom, in the whole world she most wished to oblige, she yet found a satisfaction in the sacrifice she had made, that recompensed her for much of her sufferings, and soothed her into something like tranquility; the true power of virtue she had scarce experienced before, for she found it a resource against the cruellest dejection, and a supporter in the bitterest disappointment.

C. H. A. P.

C H A P. VIII.

AN EMBARRASSMENT.

THE day passed on without any intelligence; the next day, also, passed in the same manner, and on the third, which was her birth-day, Cecilia became of age.

The preparations which had long been making among her tenants to celebrate this event, Cecilia appeared to take some share, and endeavoured to find some pleasure in. She gave a public dinner to all who were willing to partake of it, she promised redress to those who complained of hard usage, she pardoned many debts, and distributed money, food, and cloathing to the poor. These benevolent occupations made time seem less heavy, and while they freed her from solitude, diverted her suspense. She still, however, continued at the house of Mrs. Charlton, the workmen having disappointed her in finishing her own.

But, in defiance of her utmost exertion, towards the evening of this day the uneasiness of her uncertainty grew almost insupportable. The next morning she had promised

Delville to set out for London, and he expected the morning after to claim her for his wife; yet Mr. Monckton neither sent nor came, and she knew not if her letter was delivered, or if still he was unprepared for the disappointment by which he was awaited. A secret regret for the unhappiness she must occasion him, which silently yet powerfully reproached her, stole fast upon her mind, and poisoned its tranquillity; for though her opinion was invariable in holding his proposal to be wrong, she thought too highly of his character to believe he would have made it but from a mistaken notion it was right. She painted him, therefore, to herself, as glowing with indignation, accusing her of inconsistency, and perhaps suspecting her of coquetry, and imputing her change of conduct to motives the most trifling and narrow, till with resentment and disdain, he drove her wholly from his thoughts.

In a few minutes, however, the picture was reversed; Delville no more appeared storming nor unreasonable; his face wore an aspect of sorrow, and his brow was clouded with disappointment: he forebore to reproach her, but the look which her imagination delineated was more piercing than words of severest import.

These images pursued and tormented her,

her, drew tears from her eyes, and loaded her heart with anguish. Yet, when she recollected that her conduct had had in view an higher motive than pleasing Delville, she felt that it ought to offer her an higher satisfaction: she tried, therefore, to revive her spirits, by reflecting upon her integrity, and refused all indulgence to this enervating sadness, beyond what the weakness of human nature demands, as some relief to its sufferings upon every fresh attack of misery.

A conduct such as this was the best antidote against affliction, whose arrows are never with so little difficulty repelled, as when they light upon a conscience which no self-reproach has laid bare to their malignancy.

Before six o'clock the next morning, her maid came to her bedside with the following letter, which she told her had been brought by an express.

TO MISS BEVERLEY.

May this letter, with one only from Delville-Castle, be the last that *Miss Beverley* may ever receive!

Yet sweet to me as is that hope, I write in the utmost uneasiness; I have just heard that a gentleman, whom, by the description

that is given of him, I imagine Mr. Monckton, has been in search of me with a letter which he was anxious to deliver immediately.

Perhaps this letter is from Miss Beverley, perhaps it contains directions which ought instantly to be followed: would I divine what they are, with what eagerness would I study to anticipate their execution! It will not, I hope, be too late to receive them on Saturday, when her power over my actions will be confirmed, and whenever with her will communicate, shall be gratefully, joyfully, and with delight fulfilled.

I have sought Belsham in vain; he has left Lord Vanele, and no one knows whither he is gone. I have been obliged, therefore, to trust a stranger to draw up the bond; but he is a man of good character, and the time of secrecy will be too short to put his discretion in much danger. Tomorrow, Friday, I shall spend solely in endeavouring to discover Mr. Monckton; I have leisure sufficient for the search, since so prosperous has been my diligence, that *every thing is prepared!*

I have seen some lodgings in Pall-Mall, which I think are commodious and will suit you: send a servant, therefore, before you to secure them. If, upon your arrival

I should

I should venture to meet you there, but I beseech you, offended or alarmed; I shall take every possible precaution neither to be known nor seen; and I will stay with you only three minutes. The messenger who carries this is ignorant from whom it comes, for I fear his repeating my name among your servants, and he could scarce return to me with an answer before you will yourself be in town. Yes, loveliest Cecilia! at the very moment you receive this letter, the chaise will, I flatter myself, be at the door, which is to bring to me a treasure that will enrich every future hour of my life! And oh as to me it will be exhaustless; may but its sweet dispenser experience some share of the happiness she bestows, and then what! save her own purity, will be so perfect, so unfulfilled, as the felicity of her

Mr. D?

The perturbation of Cecilia upon reading this letter was unspeakable. Mr. Monckton, she found, had been wholly unsuccessful, all her heroism had answered no purpose, and the transaction was as backward as before she had exerted it.

She was now, therefore, called upon to think and act entirely for herself. Her opinion was still the same, nor did her resolution

solution waver, yet how to put it in execution she could not discern.

To write to him was impossible, since she was ignorant where he was to be found; to disappoint him at the last moment she could not resolve, since such a conduct appeared to her unfeeling and unjustifiable: for a few instants she thought of having him waited for at night in London, with a letter; but the danger of entrusting any one with such a commission, and the uncertainty of finding him, should he disguise himself, made the success of this scheme too precarious for trial.

One expedient alone occurred to her, which, though she felt to be hazardous, she believed was without an alternative: this was no other than hastening to London herself, consenting to the interview he had proposed in Pall-Mall, and then, by strongly stating her objections, and confessing the grief they occasioned her, to pique at once his generosity and his pride upon releasing her himself from the engagement into which he had entered.

She had no time to deliberate; her plan, therefore, was decided almost as soon as formed, and every moment being precious, she was obliged to awaken Mrs. Charlton, and communicate to her at once the letter
I from

from Delvile, and the new resolution she had taken.

Mrs. Charlton, having no object in view but the happiness of her young friend, with a facility that looked not for objections, and scarce saw them when presented, agreed to the expedition, and kindly consented to accompany her to London; for Cecilia, however concerned to hurry and fatigue her, was too anxious for the sanction of her presence to hesitate in soliciting it.

A chaise, therefore, was ordered; and with post-horses for speed, and two servants on horseback, the moment Mrs. Charlton was ready, they set out on their journey.

Scarce had they proceeded two miles on their way, when they were met by Mr. Monckton, who was hastening to their house.

Amazed and alarmed at a sight so unexpected, he stoppt the chaise to enquire whither they was going.

Cecilia, without answering, asked if her letter had yet been received?

"I could not," said Mr. Monckton, "deliver it to a man who was not to be found: I was this moment coming to acquaint how vainly I had sought him; but still that your journey is unnecessary unless voluntary, since I have left it at the house where you told me you should meet to-morrow

morning, and where he must then unavoidably receive it."

"Indeed, Sir," cried Cecilia, "tomorrow morning will be too late,—in conscience, in justice, and even in decency too late! I *must*, therefore, go to town; yet I go not, believe me, in opposition to your injunctions, but to enable myself, without treachery or dishonour, to fulfil them."

Mr. Monckton, aghast and confounded, made not any answer, till Cecilia gave orders to the postilion to drive on: he then hastily called to stop him, and began the warmest expostulations; but Cecilia, firm when she believed herself right, though wavering when fearful she was wrong, told him it was now too late to change her plan, and repeating her orders to the postilion, left him to his own reflections: grieved herself to reject his counsel, yet too intently occupied by her own affairs and designs, to think long of any other.

• A. C. I. L. I. A. D. •
 and the first of the year.

C. H. A. P. IX.

• A. C. I. L. I. A. D. •

A T O R M E N T.

• A. C. I. L. I. A. D. •

AT ——— they stopt for dinner; Mrs. Charlton being too much fatigued to go on without some rest, though the haste of Cecilia to meet Delville, time enough for new arranging their affairs, made her regret every moment that was spent upon the road.

Their meal was not long, and they were returning to their chaise, when they were suddenly encountered by Mr. Morrice, who was just alighted from his horse.

He congratulated himself upon the happiness of meeting them, with the air of a man who nothing doubted that happiness being mutual; then hastening to speak of the Grove, "I could hardly," he cried, "get away, my friend. Monckton won't know what to do without me, for Lady Margaret, poor old soul, is in a shocking bad way indeed, there's hardly any staying in the room with her; her breathing is just like the grunting of a hog. She can't possibly last long, for she's quite upon her last
 -A last

last legs, and tumbles about so when she walks alone, one would swear she was drunk."

"If you take infirmity," said Mrs. Charlton, who was now helped into the chaise, "for intoxication, you must suppose no old person sober."

"Vastly well said, ma'am," cried he; "I really forgot your being an old lady yourself, or I should not have made the observation. However, as to poor Lady Margaret, she may do as well as ever by and bye, for she has an excellent constitution, and I suppose she has been hardly any better than she is now these forty years, for I remember when I was quite a boy hearing her called a limping old puddle."

"Well, we'll discuss this matter, if you please," said Cecilia, "some other time." And ordered the postilion to drive on. But before they came to their next stage, Morrice having changed his horse, joined them, and rode on by their side, begging them to observe what haste he had made on purpose to have the pleasure of escorting them.

This forwardness was very offensive to Mrs. Charlton, whose years and character had long procured her more deference and respect: but Cecilia, anxious only to hasten her journey, was indifferent to every thing, save what retarded it.

At

At the same Inn they both again changed horses, and he still continued riding with them, and occasionally talking, till they were within twenty miles of London, when a disturbance upon the road exciting his curiosity, he hastily rode away from them to enquire into its cause.

Upon coming up to the place whence it proceeded, they saw a party of gentlemen on horseback surrounding a chaise which had been just overturned; and while the confusion in the road obliged the postilion to stop, Cecilia heard a lady's voice exclaiming, "I declare I dare say I am killed!" and instantly recollecting Miss Larolles, the fear of discovery and delay made her desire the man to drive on with all speed. He was preparing to obey her, but Maurice, galloping after them, called out "Miss Beverley, one of the ladies that has been overturned, is an acquaintance of yours. I used to see her with you at Mrs. Harrel's."

"Did you?" said Cecilia, much disconcerted, "I hope she is not hurt?"

"No, not at all; but the lady with her is bruised to death; won't you come and see her?"

"I am too much in haste at present, — and I can do them no good; but Mrs.

Charlton

Charlton I am sure will spare her servant, if he can be of any use."

"O but the young lady wants to speak to you; she is coming up to the chaise as fast as ever she can."

"And how should she know me?" cried Cecilia, with much surprise; "I am sure she could not see me."

"O, I told her," answered Morrice, with a nod of self-approbation for what he had done; "I told her it was you, for I knew I could soon overtake you."

Displeasure at this officiousness was unavailing, for looking out of the window, she perceived Miss Larolles, followed by half her party, not three paces from the chaise."

"O my dear creature," she called out, "what a terrible accident! I assure you I am so monstrously frightened you've no idea. It's the luckiest thing in the world that you were going this way. Never any thing happened so excessively provoking; you've no notion what a fall we've had. It's horrid shocking, I assure you. How have you been all this time? You can't conceive how glad I am to see you."

"And to which will Miss Beverley answer first," cried a voice which announced Mr. Gosport, "the joy or the sorrow? For so adroitly are they blended, that a common

common auditor could with difficulty decide whether condolence, or congratulation should have the precedency."

"How can you be so excessive horrid," cried Miss Larolles, "to talk of congratulation, when one's in such a shocking panic that one does not know if one's dead or alive!"

"Dead, then, for any wager," returned he, "if we may judge by your stillness."

"I desire, now, you won't begin joking," cried she, "for I assure you it's an excessive serious affair. I was never so rejoiced in my life as when I found I was not killed. I've been so squeezed you've no notion. I thought for a full hour I had broke both my arms."

"And my heart at the same time," said Mr. Gosport; "I hope you did not imagine that the least fragile of the three?"

"All our hearts, give me leave to add," said Captain Aresby—just then advancing, "all our hearts must have been *abimés*, by the indisposition of Miss Larolles, had not their doom been fortunately revoked by the sight of Miss Beverley."

"Well, this is excessive odd," cried Miss Larolles, "that every body should run away so from poor Mrs. Mears; she'll be so affronted you've no idea. I thought, Cap-

I thought, Captain

tain Aresby, you would have stayed to take care of her."

"I'll run and see how she is myself," cried Morrice, and away he gallopped.

"Really, ma'am," said the Captain, "I am quite *au desespoir* to have failed in any of my devoirs; but I make it a principle to be a mere looker on upon these occasions, lest I should be so unhappy as to commit any *faux pas* by too much *empressement*."

"An admirable caution!" said Mr. Gosport, "and, to so ardent a temper, a necessary check!"

Cecilia, whom the surprise and vexation of so unseasonable a meeting, when she particularly wished to have escaped all notice, had hitherto kept in painful silence, began now to recover some presence of mind; and making her compliments to Miss Larolles and Mr. Gosport, with a slight bow to the Captain, she apologized for hurrying away, but told them she had an engagement in London which could not be deferred, and was then giving orders to the postilion to drive on, when Morrice returning full speed, called out "The poor lady's so bad she is not able to stir a step; she can't put a foot to the ground, and she says she's quite black and blue; so I told her I was sure Miss Beverley would not refuse to make room for her in her chaise, till the

the

the other can be put to rights; and she says she shall take it as a great favour. Here, position, a little more to the right! come, ladies and gentlemen, get out of the way."

This impertinence, however extraordinary, Cecilia could not oppose; for Mrs. Charlton, ever compassionate and complying where there was any appearance of distress, instantly seconded the proposal: the chaise, therefore, was turned back, and she was obliged to offer a place in it to Mrs. Mears, who, though more frightened than hurt, readily accepted it, notwithstanding, to make way for her without incommoding Mrs. Charlton, she was forced to get out herself.

She failed not, however, to desire that all possible expedition might be used in refitting the other chaise for their reception; and all the gentlemen but one, dismounted their horses, in order to assist, or seem to assist in getting it ready.

This only unconcerned spectator in the midst of the apparent general bustle, was Mr. Meadows; who viewed all that passed without troubling himself to interfere, and with an air of the most evident carelessness whether matters went well or went ill.

Miss Larolles, now returning to the scene of action, suddenly screamed out, "O dear, where's my little dog! I never thought
of

of him, I declare! I love him better than any thing in the world: I would not have him hurt for an hundred thousand pounds. Lord, where is he?"

"Crushed or suffocated in the overturn, no doubt," said Mr. Gosport; "but as you must have been his executioner, what softer death could he die? If you will yourself inflict the punishment, I will submit to the same fate."

"Lord, how you love to plague one!" cried she: and then enquired among the servants what was become of her dog. The poor little animal, forgotten by its mistress, and disregarded by all others, was now discovered by its yelping; and soon found to have been the most material sufferer, by the overturn, one of its fore legs being broken.

Could screams or lamentations, reproaches to the servants, or complaints against the Destinies, have abated his pain, or made a callus of the fracture, but short would have been the duration of his misery; for neither words were saved, nor lungs were spared, the very air was rent with cries, and all present were upbraided as if accomplices in the disaster.

The postilion, at length, interrupted this vociferation with news that the chaise was again fit for use; and Cecilia, eager to be gone,

gone, finding him little regarded, repeated what he said to Miss Larolles.

"The chaise?" cried she, "why you don't suppose I'll ever get into that horrid chaise any more? I do assure you I would not upon any account."

"Not get into it?" said Cecilia, "for what purpose, then, have we all waited till it was ready?"

"O, I declare I would not go in it for forty thousand worlds. I would rather walk to an inn, if it's a hundred and fifty miles off."

"But as it happens," said Mr. Gosport, "to be only seven miles, I fancy you will condescend to ride."

"Seven miles! Lord how shocking! you frighten me so you have no idea. Poor Mrs. Mears! She'll have to go quite alone. I dare say the chaise will be down fifty times by the way. Ten to one but she breaks her neck! only conceive how horrid! I assure you I am excessive glad I am out of it."

"Very friendly, indeed!" said Mr. Gosport. "Mrs. Mears, then, may break her bones at her leisure!"

Mrs. Mears, however, when applied to, professed an equal aversion to the carriage in which she had been so unfortunate, and declared she would rather walk than return

to it, though one of her ancles was already so swelled that she could hardly stand.

"Why then the best way, ladies," cried Morrice, with the look of a man happy in vanquishing all difficulties, "will be for Mrs. Charlton, and that poor lady with the bruises, to go together in that sound chaise, and then for us gentlemen to escort this young lady and Miss Beverley on foot, till we all come to the next inn. Miss Beverley, I know, is an excellent walker, for I have heard Mr. Monckton say so."

Cecilia, though in the utmost consternation at a proposal, which must so long retard a journey she had so many reasons to wish hastened, knew not how either in decency or humanity to oppose it: and the fear of raising suspicion, from a consciousness how much there was to suspect, forced her to curb her impatience, and reduced her even to repeat the offer which Morrice had made, though she could scarce look at him for anger at his unseasonable forwardness.

No voice dissenting, the troop began to be formed. The foot consisted of the two young ladies and Mr. Gosport, who alighted to walk with Cecilia; the cavalry, of Mr. Meadows, the Captain, and Morrice, who walked their horses a foot pace, while

the rest of the party rode on with the chaise, as attendants upon Mrs. Mears.

Just before they set off, Mr. Meadows, riding negligently up to the carriage, exerted himself so far as to say to Mrs. Mears, "Are you hurt, ma'am?" and, at the same instant, seeming to recollect Cecilia, he turned about, and yawning while he touched his hat, said, "O, how d'ye do, ma'am?" and then, without waiting an answer to either of his questions, flapped it over his eyes, and joined the cavalcade, though without appearing to have any consciousness that he belonged to it.

Cecilia would most gladly have used the rejected chaise herself, but could not make such a proposal to Mrs. Charlton, who was past the age and the courage for even any appearance of enterprize. Upon enquiry, however, she had the satisfaction to hear that the distance to the next stage was but two miles, though multiplied to seven by the malice of Mr. Gosport.

Miss Larolles carried her little dog in her arms, declaring she would never more trust him a moment away from her. She acquainted Cecilia that she had been for some time upon a visit to Mrs. Mears, who, with the rest of the party, had taken her to see — house and gardens, where they had made an early dinner, from which

they were just returning home when the chaise broke down.

She then proceeded, with her usual volubility, to relate the little nothings that had passed since the winter, flying from subject to subject, with no meaning but to be heard, and no wish but to talk, ever rapid in speech, though minute in detail. This loquacity met not with any interruption, save now and then a sarcastic remark from Mr. Gosport; for Cecilia was too much occupied by her own affairs, to answer or listen to such uninteresting discourse.

Her silence, however, was at length forcibly broken; Mr. Gosport, taking advantage of the first moment Miss Larolles stopt for breath, said, "Pray what carries you to town, Miss Beyerley, at this time of the year?"

Cecilia, whose thoughts had been wholly employed upon what would pass at her approaching meeting with Delvile, was so entirely unprepared for this question, that she could make to it no manner of answer; till Mr. Gosport, in a tone of some surprise, repeated it, and then, not without hesitation, she said, "I have some business, Sir, in London, — pray how long have you been in the country?"

"Business, have you?" cried he, struck by her evasion; "and pray what can you and business have in common?"

"More than you may imagine," answered she, with greater steadiness; "and perhaps before long I may even have enough to teach me the enjoyment of leisure."

"Why you don't pretend to play my Lady Notable, and become your own steward?"

"And what can I do better?"

"What? Why seek one ready-made to take the trouble off your hands? There are such creatures to be found, I promise you: beasts of burthen, who will freely undertake the management of your estate, for no other reward than the trifling one of possessing it. Can you now where meet with such an animal?"

"I don't know," answered she, laughing, "I have not been looking out."

"And have none such made application to you?"

"Why no,—I believe not."

"Fie, fie! no register-office keeper has been pestered with more claimants. You know they assault you by dozens."

"You must pardon me, indeed, I know not any such thing."

"You know," then, why they do not, and that is much the same."

"I may conjecture why, at least: the place, I suppose, is not worth the service."

"No, no; the place, they conclude, is already seized, and the fee-simple of the estate is the heart of the owner. Is it not so?"

"The heart of the owner," answered she, a little confused, "may, indeed, be simple, but not, perhaps, so easily seized as you imagine."

"Have you, then, wisely saved it from a storm, by a generous surrender? you have been, indeed, in an excellent school for the study both of attack and defence; Delville-Castle is a fortress which, even in ruins, proves its strength by its antiquity: and it teaches, also, an admirable lesson, by displaying the dangerous, the infallible power of time, which defies all might; and undermines all strength; which breaks down every barrier, and shews nothing enduring but itself." Then looking at her with an arch earnestness, "I think," he added, "you made a long visit there; did this observation never occur to you? did you never perceive, never *feel*, rather, the insidious properties of time?"

"Yes, certainly, answered she," alarmed at the very mention of Delville-Castle, yet affecting

affecting to understand literally what was said metaphorically, "the havock of time upon the place could not fail striking me."

"And was its havock," said he, yet more archly, "merely external? is all within safe? sound and firm? and did the length of your residence shew its power by no new mischief?"

"Doubtless, not," answered she, with the same pretended ignorance, "the place is not in so desperate a condition as to exhibit any visible marks of decay in the course of three or four months."

"And, do you not know," cried he, "that the place to which I allude may receive a mischief in as many minutes which double the number of years cannot rectify? The internal parts of a building are not less vulnerable to accident than its outside; and though the evil may more easily be concealed, it will with greater difficulty be remedied. Many a fair structure have I seen, which, like that now before me," (looking with much significance at Cecilia,) "has to the eye seemed perfect in all its parts, and unhurt either by time or casualty, while within, some lurking evil, some latent injury, has secretly worked its way into the very heart of the edifice, where it has consumed its strength,"

and laid waste its powers, till, sinking deeper and deeper, it has sapped its very foundation, before the superstructure has exhibited any token of danger. Is such an accident among the things you hold to be possible?"

"Your language," said she, colouring very high, "is so florid, that I must own it renders your meaning rather obscure."

"Shall I illustrate it by an example? Suppose, during your abode in Delville-Castle, ——"

"No, no," interrupted she, with involuntary quickness, "why should I trouble you to make illustrations?"

"O pray, my dear creature," cried Miss Larolles, "how is Mrs. Harrel? I was never so sorry for any body in my life. I quite forgot to ask after her."

"Ay, poor Harrel!" cried Morrice, "he was a great loss to his friends. I had just begun to have a regard for him: we were growing extremely intimate. Poor fellow! he really gave most excellent dinners."

"Harrel?" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Meadows, who seemed just then to first hear what was going forward, "who was he?"

"O, as good-natured a fellow as ever I knew in my life," answered Morrice; "he was never out of humour: he was drinking
and

and singing and dancing to the very last moment. Don't you remember him, Sir, that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows made not any answer, but rode languidly on.

Morrice, ever more flippanant than sagacious, called out, "I really believe the gentleman's deaf! he won't so much as say *umph*, and *bay*, now; but I'll give him such a hallow in his ears, as shall make him hear me whether he will or no. Sir! I say!" bawling aloud, "have you forgot that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows, starting at being thus shouted at, looked towards Morrice with some surprise, and said, "Were you so obliging, Sir, as to speak to me?"

"Lord, yes, Sir," said Morrice, amazed; "I thought you had asked something about Mr. Harrel, so I just made an answer to it;—that's all."

"Sir you are very good," returned he, slightly bowing, and then looking another way, as if thoroughly satisfied with what had passed.

"But I say, Sir," resumed Morrice, "don't you remember how Mr. Harrel was?"

"Mr. who, Sir?"

"Mr. Harrel, Sir; was not you just now asking me who he was?"

"O, ay, true," cried Meadows, in a tone of extreme weariness, "I am much obliged to you. Pray give my respects to him." And, touching his hat, he was riding away; but the astonished Morrice called out, "Your respects to him? why lord! Sir, don't you know he's dead?"

"Dead?—who, Sir?"

"Why Mr. Harrel, Sir."

"Harrel?—O, very true," cried Meadows, with a face of sudden recollection; "he shot himself, I think, or was knocked down, or something of that sort. I remember it perfectly."

"O pray," cried Miss Earolles, "don't let's talk about it, it's the cruellest thing I ever knew in my life. I assure you I was so shocked, I thought I should never have got the better of it. I remember the next night at Ranslagh I could talk of nothing else. I dare say I told it to 500 people. I assure you I was tired to death; only conceive how distressing!"

"An excellent method," cried Mr. Gosport, "to drive it out of your own head, by driving it into the heads of your neighbours! But were you not afraid, by such an ebullition of pathos, to burst as many hearts as you had auditors?"

"O I assure you," cried she, "every body was so excessive shocked you're no notion;

notion; one heard of nothing else; all the world was raving mad about it."

"Really yes," cried the Captain; "the subject was *obsédé* upon one *partout*. There was scarce any breathing for it: it poured from all directions; I must confess I was *aneanti* with it to a degree."

"But the most shocking thing in nature," cried Miss Larolles, "was going to the sale. I never missed a single day. One used to meet the whole world there, and every body was so sorry you can't conceive. It was quite horrid. I assure you I never suffered so much before; it made me so unhappy you can't imagine."

"That I am most ready to grant," said Mr. Gosport, "be the powers of imagination ever so excentric."

"Sir Robert Floyer and Mr. Marriot," continued Miss Larolles, "have behaved so ill you've no idea, for they have done nothing ever since but say how monstrously Mr. Harrel had cheated them, and how they lost such immense sums by him; — only conceive how ill-natured!"

"And they complain," cried Morrice, "that old Mr. Delville used them worse; for that when they had been defrauded of all that money on purpose to pay their addresses to Miss Beverley, he would never let them see her, but all of a

sudden took her off into the country, on purpose to marry her to his own son."

The cheeks of Cecilia now glowed with the deepest blushes; but, finding by a general silence that she was expected to make some answer, she said, with what unconcern she could assume, "They were very much mistaken; Mr. Delvile had no such view."

"Indeed?" cried Mr. Gosport, again perceiving her change of countenance; "and is it possible you have actually escaped a siege, while every body concluded you taken by assault? Pray where is young Delvile at present?"

"I don't—I can't tell, Sir."

"Is it long since you have seen him?"

"It is two months," answered she, with yet more hesitation, "since I was at Delvile-Castle."

"O, but," cried Morrice, "did not you see him while he was in Suffolk? I believe, indeed, he is there now, for it was only yesterday I heard of his coming down, by a gentleman who called upon Lady Margaret, and told us he had seen a stranger, a day or two ago, at Mrs. Charlton's door, and when he asked who he was, they told him his name was Delvile, and said he was on a visit at Mr. Biddulph's."

Cecilia

Cecilia was quite confounded by this speech; to have it known that Delvile had visited her, was in itself alarming, but to have her own equivocation thus glaringly exposed, was infinitely more dangerous. The just suspicions to which it must give rise filled her with dread, and the palpable evasion in which she had been discovered, overwhelmed her with confusion.

"So you had forgotten," said Mr. Gosport, looking at her with much archness, "that you had seen him ~~within~~ the two months? but no wonder; for where is the lady who having so many admirers, can be at the trouble to remember which of them she saw last? or who, being so accustomed to adulation, can hold it worth while to enquire whence it comes? A thousand Mr. Delviles are to Miss Beverley but as one; used from them all to the same tale, she regards them not individually as lovers, but collectively as men; and so gather, even from herself, which she is most inclined to favour, she must probably desire, like Portia in the Merchant of Venice, that their names may be run over one by one, before she can distinctly tell which is which."

The gallant gaiety of this speech, was some relief to Cecilia, who was beginning a laughing reply, when Morrice called out,

"That

"That man looks as if he was upon the scout." And, raising her eyes, she perceived a man on horseback, who, though much muffled up, his hat flapped, and a handkerchief held to his mouth and chin, she instantly, by his air and figure, recognized to be Delvile.

In much consternation at this sight, she forgot what she meant to say, and dropping her eyes, walked silently on. Mr. Gosport, attentive to her motions, looked from her to the horseman, and after a short examination, said, "I think I have seen that man before; have *you*, Miss Beverley?" "Me?—no,"—answered she, "I believe not,—I hardly, indeed, see him now."

"I have, I am pretty sure," said Morrice; "and if I could see his face, I dare say I should recollect him."

"He seems very willing to know if he can recollect any of *us*," said Mr. Gosport, "and, if I am not mistaken, he sees much better than he is seen."

He was now come up to them, and though a glance sufficed to discover the object of his search, the sight of the party with which she was surrounded made him not dare stop or speak to her, and therefore, clapping spurs to his horse, he galloped past them.

"See,"

"See," cried Morrice, looking after him, "how he turns round to examine us! I wonder who he is."

"Perhaps some highwayman!" cried Miss Larolles; "I assure you I am in a prodigious fright: I should hate to be robbed, so you can't think."

"I was going to make much the same conjecture," said Mr. Gosport, "and, if I am not greatly deceived, that man is a robber of no common sort. What think you, Miss Beverley, can you discern a thief in disguise?"

"No, indeed; I pretend to no such extraordinary knowledge."

"That's true; for all that you pretend is extraordinary ignorance."

"I have a good mind," said Morrice, "to ride after him, and see what he is about."

"What for?" exclaimed Cecilia, greatly alarmed; "there can certainly be no occasion!"

"No, pray don't," cried Miss Larolles, "for I assure you if he should come back to rob us, I should die upon the spot. Nothing could be so disagreeable; I should scream, so, you've no idea."

Morrice then gave up the proposal, and they walked quietly on; but Cecilia was extremely

extremely disturbed by this accident; she readily conjectured that, impatient for her arrival, Delville had ridden that way, to see what had retarded her, and she was sensible that nothing could be so desirable as an immediate explanation of the motive of her journey. Such a meeting, therefore, had she been alone, was just what she could have wished, though, thus unluckily encompassed, it only added to her anxiety.

Involuntarily, however, she quickened her pace, through her eagerness to be relieved from so troublesome a party: but Miss Larolles, who was in no such haste, protested she could not keep up with her; saying, "You don't consider that I have got this sweet little dog to carry, and he is such a shocking plague to me you've no notion. Only conceive what a weight he is!"

"Pray, ma'am," cried Morrice, "let me take him for you; I'll be very careful of him, I promise you, and you need not be afraid to trust me, for I understand more about dogs than about any thing."

Miss Larolles, after many fond caresses, being really weary, consented, and Morrice placed the little animal before him on horseback: but while this matter was adjusting, and Miss Larolles was giving directions how she would have it held, Morrice exclaimed, "Look, Look! that man is coming

coming back! He is certainly watching us. There! now he's going off again!—I suppose he saw me remarking him."

"I dare say he's laying in wait to rob us," said Miss Larolles; "so when we turn off the high road, to go to Mrs. Mears, I suppose he'll come gallopping after us. It's excessive horrid, I assure you."

"'Tis a petrifying thing," said the captain, "that one must always be *degouté* by some wretched being or other of this sort; but pray be not deranged, I will ride after him, if you please, and do *mon possible* to get rid of him."

"Indeed I wish you would," answered Miss Larolles, "for I assure you he has put such shocking notions into my head, it's quite disagreeable."

"I shall make it a principle," said the captain, "to have the honour of obeying you." And was riding off, when Cecilia, in great agitation, called out, "Why should you go, Sir?—he is not in our way,—pray let him alone,—for what purpose should you pursue him?"

"I hope," said Mr. Gosport, "for the purpose of making him join our company, to some part of which I fancy he would be no very intolerable addition."

This speech again silenced Cecilia, who perceived, with the utmost confusion, that both

both Delville and herself were undoubtedly suspected by Mr. Gosport, if not already actually betrayed to him. She was obliged, therefore, to let the matter take its course, though quite sick with apprehension lest a full discovery should follow the projected pursuit.

The Captain, who wanted not courage, however deeply in vanity and affectation he had buried common sense, stood suspended, upon the request of Cecilia, that he would not go, and, with a shrug of distress, said, "Give me leave to own I am *parfaitment* in a state the most *accablant* in the world: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to profit of the occasion to accommodate either of these ladies; but as they proceed upon different principles, I am *indécidé* to a degree which way to turn myself!"

"Put it to the vote, then," said Morrice; "the two ladies have both spoke; now, then, for the gentleman. Come, Sir," to Mr. Gosport, "what say you?"

"O, fetch the culprit back, by all means," answered he; "and then let us all insist upon his opening his cause, by telling us in what he has offended us; for there is no part of his business, I believe; with which we are less acquainted."

"Well,"

"Well," said Morrice, "I'm for asking him a few questions too; so is the Captain; so every body has spoke but you, Sir," addressing himself to Mr. Meadows, "So now, Sir, let's hear your opinion."

Mr. Meadows, appearing wholly inattentive, rode on. "Why, Sir! I say!" cried Morris, louder, "we are all waiting for your vote. Pray what is the gentleman's name? it's duced hard to make him hear one."

"His name is Meadows," said Miss Larolles, in a low voice, "and I assure you sometimes he won't hear people by the hour together. He's so excessive absent you've no notion. One day he made me so mad, that I could not help crying; and Mr. Sawyer was standing by the whole time! and I assure you I believe he laughed at me. Only conceive how distressing!"

"May be," said Morrice, "its out of bashfulness: perhaps he thinks we shall cut him up."

"Bashfulness," repeated Miss Larolles; "Lord, you don't conceive the thing at all. Why he's at the very head of the ton! There's nothing in the world so fashionable as taking no notice of things, and never seeing people, and saying nothing at all, and never hearing a word; and not knowing one's own acquaintance. All the ton people do

do so, and I assure you as to Mr. Meadows, he's so excessively courted by every body, that if he does but say a syllable, he thinks it such an immense favour, you've no idea."

This account, however little alluring in itself, of his celebrity, was yet sufficient to make Morrice covet his further acquaintance: for Morrice was ever attentive to turn his pleasure to his profit, and never negligent of his interest, but when ignorant how to pursue it. He returned, therefore, to the charge, though by no means with the same freedom he had begun it, and lowering his voice to a tone of respect and submission, he said, "Pray, Sir, may we take the liberty to ask your advice, whether we shall go on, or take a turn back?"

Mr. Meadows made not any answer; but when Morrice was going to repeat his question, without appearing even to know that he was near him, he abruptly said to Miss Larolles, "Pray what is become of Mrs. Mears? I don't see her amongst us."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," exclaimed she, "how can you be so odd? Don't you remember she went on in a chaise to the inn?"

"O, ay, true," cried he; "I protest I had quite forgot it; I beg your pardon, indeed. Yes, I recollect now, — she fell off her horse."

"Her

"Her horse? Why you know she was in her chaise."

"Her chaise, was it? — ay, true, so it was. Poor thing! — I am glad she was not hurt."

"Not hurt? Why she's so excessively bruised, she can't stir a step! Only conceive what a memory you've got!"

"I am most extremely sorry for her indeed," cried he, again stretching himself and yawning; "poor soul! — I hope she won't die. Do you think she will!"

"Die!" repeated Miss Larolles, with a scream, "Lord, how shocking! You are really enough to frighten one to hear you."

"But Sir," said Morrice, "I wish you would be so kind as to give us your vote; the man will else be gone so far, we sha'n't be able to overtake him. — Though I do really believe that is the very fellow coming back to peep at us again!"

"I am *ennuyé* to a degree," cried the Captain; "he is certainly set upon us as a spy, and I must really beg leave to enquire of him upon what principle he incommodes us." — And instantly he rode after him.

"And so will I too," cried Morrice, following.

Miss

Miss Larolles screamed after him to give her first her little dog ; but with a school-boy's eagerness to be foremost, he galloped on without heeding her.

The uneasiness of Cecilia now encreased every moment ; the discovery of Delvile seemed unavoidable, and his impatient and indiscreet watchfulness must have rendered the motives of his disguise but too glaring. All she had left to hope was arriving at the inn before the detection was announced, and at least saving herself the cruel mortification of hearing the raillery which would follow it.

Even this, however, was not allowed her ; Miss Larolles, whom she had no means to quit, hardly stirred another step, from her anxiety for her dog, and the earnestness of her curiosity about the stranger. She loitered, stopt now to talk, and now to listen, and was scarce moved a yard from the spot where she had been left ; when the Captain and Morrice returned.

" We could not for our lives overtake the fellow," said Morrice ; " he was well mounted, I promise you, and I'll warrant he knows what he's about, for he turned off so short at a place where there were two narrow lanes, that we could not make out which way he went."

Cecilia,

Cecilia, relieved and delighted by this unexpected escape, now recovered her composure, and was content to saunter on without repining.

"But though we could not seize his person," said the Captain, "we have debar-*rassé* ourselves *tout à fait* from his pursuit; I hope, therefore, Miss Larolles will make a revoke of her apprehensions."

The answer to this was nothing but a loud scream, with an exclamation, "Lord, where's my dog?"

"Your dog!" cried Morrice, looking aghast, "good stars! I never thought of him!"

"How excessive barbarous!" cried Miss Larolles, "you've killed him, I dare say. Only think how shocking! I had rather have seen any body served so in the world. I shall never forgive it, I assure you."

"Lord, ma'am," said Morrice, "How can you suppose I've killed him? Poor, pretty creature, I'm sure I liked him prodigiously. I can't think for my life where he can be: but I have a notion he must have dropt down some where while I happened to be on the full gallop. I'll go look him, however, for we went at such a rate that I never missed him."

Away again rode Morrice.

"I am *abimé* to the greatest degree,"
said

said the Captain, "that the poor little sweet fellow should be lost: if I had thought him in any danger, I would have made it a principle to have had a regard to his person myself. Will you give me leave, ma'am, to have the honour of seeking him *partout*?"

"O, I wish you would with all my heart; for I assure you if I don't find him, I shall think it so excessive distressing you can't conceive."

The Captain touched his hat, and was gone.

These repeated impediments almost robbed Cecilia of all patience; yet her total inability of resistance obliged her to submit, and compelled her to go, stop, or turn, according to their own motions.

"Now if Mr. Meadows had the least good-nature in the world," said Miss Larolles, "he would offer to help us; but he's so excessive odd, that I believe if we were all of us to fall down and break our necks, he would be so absent he would hardly take the trouble to ask us how we did."

"Why in so desperate a case," said Mr. Gosport, "the trouble would be rather superfluous. However, don't repine that one of the cavaliers stays with us by way of guard, lest your friend the spy should
take

take us by surprize while our troop is dispersed."

"O Lord," cried Miss Larolles, "now you put it in my head, I dare say that wretch has got my dog! only think how horrid!"

"I saw plainly," said Mr. Gosport, looking significantly at Cecilia, "that he was feloniously inclined, though I must confess I took him not for a dog-stealer."

Miss Larolles then, running up to Mr. Meadows, called out, "I have a prodigious immense favour to ask of you, Mr. Meadows."

"Ma'am!" cried Mr. Meadows, with his usual start.

"It's only to know, whether if that horrid creature should come back, you could not just ride up to him and shoot him, before he gets to us? Now will you promise me to do it?"

"You are vastly good," said he, with a vacant smile; "what a charming evening! Do you love the country?"

"Yes, vastly; only I'm so monstrously tired, I can hardly stir a step. Do *you* like it?"

"The country? O no! I detest it! Dusty hedges, and chirping sparrows! 'Tis amazing to me any body can exist upon such terms."

"I assure you," cried Miss Larolles, "I'm quite of your opinion. I hate the country so you've no notion. I wish with all my heart it was all under ground. I declare, when I first go into it for the summer, I cry so you can't think. I like nothing but London.—Don't you?"

"London!" repeated Mr. Meadows, "O melancholy! the sink of all vice and depravity. Streets without light! Houses without air! Neighbourhood without society! Talkers without listeners!—'Tis astonishing any rational being can endure to be so miserably immured."

"Lord, Mr. Meadows," cried she, angrily, "I believe you would have one live no where!"

"True, very true, ma'am," said he, yawning, "one really lives no where; one does but vegetate, and wish it all at an end. Don't you find it so, ma'am?"

"Me? no indeed; I assure you I like living of all things. Whenever I'm ill, I'm in such a fright you've no idea. I always think I'm going to die, and it puts me so out of spirits you can't think. Does not it you, too?"

Here Mr. Meadows, looking another way, began to whistle.

"Lord," cried Miss Larolles, "how
3 excessive

excessive distressing! to ask one questions, and then never hear what one answers!"

Here the Captain returned alone; and Miss Larolles, flying to meet him, demanded where was her dog?

"I have the *malheur* to assure you," answered he, "that I never was more *ane-anti* in my life! the pretty little fellow has broke another leg!"

Miss Larolles, in a passion of grief, then declared she was certain that Morrice had maimed him thus on purpose, and desired to know where the vile wretch was?

"He was so much discomposed at the incident," replied the Captain, "that he rodè instantly another way. I took up the pretty fellow therefore myself, and have done *mon possible* not to derange him."

The unfortunate little animal was then delivered to Miss Larolles; and after much lamentation, they at length continued their walk, and, without further adventure, arrived at the inn.

B O O K VIII.

C H A P T E R I.

AN INTERRUPTION.

BUT here, instead of finding, as she expected, Mrs. Charlton and fresh horses in readiness, Cecilia saw neither chaise nor preparation; Mrs. Charlton was quietly seated in a parlour, and drinking tea with Mrs. Mears.

Vexed and disappointed, she ordered horses immediately to the chaise, and entreated Mrs. Charlton to lose no more time. But the various delays which had already retarded them, had made it now so late that it was impossible to get into London by daylight, and Mrs. Charlton not having courage to be upon the road after dark, had settled to sleep at the inn, and purposed not to proceed till the next morning.

Half distracted at this new difficulty, Cecilia begged to speak with her alone, and then represented

represented in the most earnest manner, the absolute necessity there was for her being in London that night: "Every thing," said she, "depends upon it, and the whole purpose of my journey will otherwise be lost, for Mr. Delvile will else think himself extremely ill used, and to make him reparation, I may be compelled to submit to almost whatever terms he shall propose."

Mrs. Charlton, kind and yielding, understood not this entreaty, which Cecilia made with infinite pain to herself, from the reluctance she felt to pursuing her own interest and inclination in opposition to those of her worthy old friend: but as she was now circumstanced, she considered the immediate prosecution of her journey as her only resource against first irritating Delvile by an abrupt disappointment, and appeasing him next by a concession which would make that disappointment end in nothing.

The chaise was soon ready, and Mrs. Charlton and Cecilia were rising to take leave of the company, when a man and horse galloped full speed into the inn-yard, and in less than a minute, Morrice bounced into the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried he, quite out of breath with haste, "I have got some news for you! I've just found out

who that person is that has been watching us."

Cecilia, starting at this most unwelcome intelligence, would now have run into the chaise without hearing him proceed; but Mrs. Charlton, who knew neither whom nor what he meant, involuntarily stooped, and Cecilia, whose arm she leant upon, was compelled to stay.

Every one else eagerly desired to know who he was.

"Why I'll tell you," said he, "how I found him out. I was thinking in my own mind what I could possibly do to make amends for that unlucky accident about the dog, and just then I spied the very man that had made me drop him; so I thought at least I'd find out who he was. I rode up to him so quick that he could not get away from me, though I saw plainly it was the thing he meant. But still he kept himself muffled up, just as he did before. Not so snug, thought I, my friend, I shall have you yet! It's a fine evening, Sir, says I; but he took no notice: so then I came more to the point; Sir, says I, I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you, though I quite forget where. Still he made no answer: if you have no objection, Sir, says I, I shall be glad to ride with you, for the night's coming on, and we have neither of us a servant.

But

But then, without a word speaking; he rode on the quicker. However, I jogged by his side, as fast as he, and said, Pray, Sir, did you know any thing of that company you were looking at so hard just now? And at this he could hold out no longer; he turned to me in a most fierce passion, and said pray, Sir, don't be troublesome. And then he got off; for when I found by his voice who he was, I let him alone."

Cecilia, who could bear to hear no more, again hastened Mrs. Charlton; who now moved on; but Morrice, stepping between them both and the door, said "Now do pray, Miss Beverley, guess who it was."

"No indeed, I cannot," said she, in the utmost confusion, "nor have I any time to hear. Come, dear madam, we shall be very late indeed."

"O but I *must* tell you before you go;—why it was young Mr. Delvile! the same that I saw with you one night at the Pantheon, and that I used to meet last spring at Mr. Harrel's."

"Mr. Delvile!" repeated every one; "very strange he should not speak."

"Pray, ma'am," continued Morrice, "is it not the same gentleman that was at Mr. Biddulph's?"

Cecilia, half dead with shame and vexation, stammered out "No, no,—I be-

lieve not,—I can't tell; —I have not a moment to spare."

And then, at last, got Mrs. Charlton out of the room, and into the chaise. But thither, before she could drive off, she was followed by Mr. Gosport, who gravely came to offer his advice that she would immediately lodge an information at the Public Office in Bow-Street, that a very suspicious looking man had been observed loitering in those parts, who appeared to harbour most dangerous designs against her person and property.

Cecilia was too much confounded to rally or reply, and Mr. Gosport returned to his party with his speech unanswered.

The rest of the journey was without any new casualty, for late as it was, they escaped being robbed: but neither robbers nor new casualties were wanting to make it unpleasant to Cecilia; the incidents which had already happened sufficed for that purpose; and the consciousness of being so generally betrayed, added to the delay of her recantation, prepared her for nothing but mortifications to herself, and conflicts with Delville the most bitter and severe.

It was near ten o'clock before they arrived in Pall-Mall. The house to which Delville had given directions was easily found,

found, and the servant sent forward had prepared the people of it for their reception.

In the cruellest anxiety and trepidation, Cecilia then counted every moment till Delvile came. She planned an apology for her conduct with all the address of which she was mistress, and determined to bear his disappointment and indignation with firmness: yet the part she had to act was both hard and artificial; she sighed to have it over, and repined she must have it at all.

The instant there was a knock at the door, she flew out upon the stairs to listen; and hearing his well-known voice enquiring for the ladies who had just taken the lodgings, she ran back to Mrs. Charlton, saying, "Ah, madam, assist me I entreat! for now must I merit, or forfeit your esteem for-ever!"

"Can you pardon," cried Delvile, as he entered the room, "an intrusion which was not in *our bond*? But how could I wait till to-morrow, when I knew you were in town to-night?"

He then made his compliments to Mrs. Charlton, and, after enquiring how she had borne her journey, turned again to Cecilia, whose uneasy sensations he saw but too plainly in her countenance: "Are you

G 5 angry,"

angry," cried he, anxiously, "that I have ventured to come hither to night?"

"No," answered she, struggling with all her feelings for composure; "what we wish is easily excused; and I am glad to see you to night, because otherwise——"

She hesitated; and Delville, little imagining why, thanked her in the warmest terms for her condescension. He then related how he had been tormented by Morrice, enquired why Mr. Monckton had not accompanied her, and what could possibly have induced her to make her journey so late, or, with so large a party, to be walking upon the high road instead of hastening to London.

"I wonder not," answered she, more steadily, "at your surprise, though I have now no time to lessen it. You have never, I find, received my letter?"

"No," cried he, much struck by her manner; "was it to forbid our meeting till to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" she repeated expressively, "no; it was to forbid——"

Here the door was suddenly opened, and Morrice burst into the room.

The dismay and astonishment of Delville at sight of him could only be equalled by the confusion and consternation of Cecilia; but Morrice, perceiving neither, abruptly called

called out "Miss Beverley, I quite beg your pardon for coming so late, but you must know——" then stopping short upon seeing Delville, "Good lord," he exclaimed, "if here is not our *gentleman spy*! Why, Sir, you have not spared the spur! I left you gallopping off quite another way."

"However that may be, Sir," cried Delville, equally enraged at the interruption and the observation, "you did not, I presume, wait upon Miss Beverley to talk of *me*?"

"No, Sir," answered he, lightly, "for I had told her all about you at the inn. Did not I, Miss Beverley? Did not I tell you I was sure it was Mr. Delville that was dodging us about so? Though I believe, Sir, you thought I had not found you out?"

"And pray, young man," said Mrs. Charlton, much offended by this familiar intrusion, "how did you find *us* out?"

"Why, ma'am, by the luckiest accident in the world! Just as I was riding into town, I met the returned chaise that brought you; and I knew the postilion very well, as I go that road pretty often: so, by the merest chance in the world, I saw him by the light of the moon. And then he told me where he had set you down."

"And pray, Sir," again asked Mrs.

G 6 Charlton,

Charlton, " what was your reason for making the enquiry? "

" Why, ma'am, I had a little favour to ask of Miss Beverley, that made me think I would take the liberty to call."

" And was this time of night, Sir," she returned, " the only one you could chuse for that purpose? "

" Why, ma'am, I'll tell you how that was; I did not mean to have called till to-morrow morning; but as I was willing to know if the postilion had given me a right direction, I knocked one soft little knock at the door, thinking you might be gone to bed after your journey, merely to ask if it was the right house; but when the servant told me there was a gentleman with you already, I thought there would be no harm in just stepping for a moment up stairs."

" And what, Sir," said Cecilia, whom mingled shame and vexation had hitherto kept silent, " is your business with me? "

" Why, ma'am, I only just called to give you a direction to a most excellent dog-doctor, as we call him, that lives at the corner of——"

" A dog-doctor, Sir?" repeated Cecilia, " and what have I to do with any such direction? "

" Why you must know, ma'am, I have been in the greatest concern imaginable
about

about that accident which happened to me with the poor little dog, and so——”

“What little dog, Sir?” cried Delvile, who now began to conclude he was not sober, “do you know what you are talking of?”

“Yes, Sir, for it was that very little dog you made me drop out of my arms, by which means he broke his other leg.”

“I made you drop him?” cried Delvile, angrily, “I believe, Sir, you had much better call some other time; it does not appear to me that you are in a proper situation for remaining here at present.”

“Sir, I shall be gone in an instant,” answered Morrice; “I merely wanted to beg the favour of Miss Beverley to tell that young lady that owned the dog, that if she will carry him to this man, I am sure he will make a cure of him.”

“Come, Sir,” said Delvile, convinced now of his inebriety, “if you please we will walk away together.”

“I don’t mean to take *you* away, Sir,” said Morrice, looking very significantly, “for I suppose you have not rode so hard to go so soon; but as to me, I’ll only write the direction, and be off.”

Delvile, amazed and irritated at so many following specimens of ignorant assurance, would not, in his present eagerness, have scrupled

scrupled turning him out of the house, had he not thought it imprudent, upon such an occasion, to quarrel with him, and improper, at so late an hour, to be left behind: he therefore only, while he was writing the direction, told Cecilia, in a low voice, that he would get rid of him and return in an instant.

They then went together; leaving Cecilia in an agony of distress surpassing all she had hitherto experienced." "Ah, Mrs. Charlton," she cried, "what refuge have I now from ridicule, or perhaps disgrace! Mr. Delville has been detected watching me in disguise! he has been discovered at this late hour meeting me in private! The story will reach his family with all the hyperbole of exaggeration; — how will his noble mother disdain me! how cruelly shall I sink before the severity of her eye!"

Mrs. Charlton tried to comfort her, but the effort was vain, and she spent her time in the bitterest repining till eleven o'clock. Delville's not returning then added wonder to her sadness, and the impropriety of his returning at all so late, grew every instant more glaring.

At last, though in great disturbance, and evidently much ruffled in his temper, he came: "I feared," he cried, "I had passed the time for admittance, and the torture

ture I have suffered from being detained has almost driven me wild. I have been in misery to see you again,——your looks, your manner;——the letter you talk of,——all have filled me with alarm; and though I know not what it is, I have to dread, I find it impossible to rest a moment without some explanation. Tell me, then, why you seem thus strange and thus depressed? Tell me what that letter was to forbid? Tell me any thing, and every thing, but that you repent your condescension."

"That letter," said Cecilia, "would have explained to you all. I scarce know how to communicate its contents: yet I hope you will hear with patience what I acknowledge I have resolved upon only from necessity. That letter was to tell you that tomorrow we must not meet;——it was to prepare you, indeed, for our meeting, perhaps, never more!"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed he, starting; "what is it you mean?"

"That I have made a promise too rash to be kept; that you must pardon me if, late as it is, I retract, since I am convinced it was wrong, and must be wretched in performing it."

Confounded and dismayed, for a moment he continued silent; and then passionately called out, "Who has been with you to-

defame me in your opinion? Who has barbarously wronged my character since I left you last Monday? Mr. Monckton received me coldly,—has he injured me in your esteem? Tell, tell me but to whom I owe this change, that my vindication, if it restores not your favour, may at least make you cease to blush that once I was honoured with some share of it!

“It wants not to be restored,” said Cecilia, with much softness, “since it has never been alienated. Be satisfied that I think of you as I thought when we last parted, and generously forbear to reproach me, when I assure you I am actuated by principles which you ought not to disapprove.”

“And are you then, unchanged?” cried he, more gently, “and is your esteem for me still——”

“I thought it justice to say so once,” cried she, hastily interrupting him, “but exact from me nothing more. It is too late for us now to talk any longer; to-morrow you may find my letter at Mrs. Roberts’s, and that, short as it is, contains my resolution and its cause.”

“Never,” cried he vehemently, “can I quit you without knowing it! I would not linger till to-morrow in this suspense to be master of the universe!”

“I

"I have told it you, Sir, already: whatever is clandestine carries a consciousness of evil, and so repugnant do I find it to my disposition and opinions, that till you give me back the promise I so unworthily made, I must be a stranger to peace, because at war with my own actions and myself."

"Recover, then, your peace," cried Delvile, with much emotion, "for I here acquit you of all promise! — to fetter, to compel you, were too inhuman to afford me any happiness. Yet hear me, dispassionately hear me, and deliberate a moment before you resolve upon my exile. Your scruples I am not now going combat, I grieve that they are so powerful, but I have no new arguments with which to oppose them; all I have to say, is, that it is now too late for a retreat to satisfy them."

"True, Sir, and far too true! yet is it always best to do right, however tardily; always better to repent, than to grow callous in wrong."

"Suffer not, however, your delicacy for my family to make you forget what is due to yourself as well as to me: the fear of shocking you led me just now to conceal what a greater fear now urges me to mention. The honour I have had in view is already known to many, and in a very short time there are none will be ignorant of it. That impudent

dent young man, Morrice, had the effrontery to rally me upon my passion for you; and though I reproved him with great asperity, he followed me into a coffee-house, whither I went merely to avoid him. There I forced myself to stay, till I saw him engaged with a news-paper, and then, through various private streets and alleys, I returned hither; but judge my indignation, when the moment I knocked at the door, I perceived him again at my side!"

"Did he, then, see you come in?"

"I angrily demanded what he meant by thus pursuing me; he very submissively begged my pardon, and said he had had a notion I should come back, and had therefore only followed me to see if he was right! I hesitated for an instant whether to chastise, or confide in him, but believing a few hours would make his impertinence immaterial, I did neither,—the door opened, and I came in."

He stopt; but Cecilia was too much shocked to answer him.

"Now, then," said he, "weigh your objections against the consequences which must follow. It is discovered I attended you in town; it will be presumed I had your permission for such attendance: to separate, therefore, now, will be to no purpose with respect to that delicacy which makes

makes you wish it. It will be food for conjecture, for enquiry, for wonder, almost while both our names are remembered; and while to me it will bring the keenest misery in the severity of my disappointment, it will cast over your own conduct a veil of mystery and obscurity wholly subversive of that unclouded openness, that fair, transparent ingenuousness, by which it has hitherto been distinguished."

"Alas, then," said she, "how dreadfully have I erred, that whatever path I now take must lead me wrong!"

"You overwhelm me with grief," cried Delville, "by finding you thus distressed; when I had hoped—Oh cruel Cecilia! how different to this did I hope to have met you!—all your doubts settled, all your fears removed, your mind perfectly composed, and ready, unreluctantly, to ratify the promise with so much sweetness accorded me!—where now are those hopes!—where now——"

"Why will you not begone?" cried Cecilia, uneasily, "indeed it is too late to stay."

"Tell me first," cried he, with great energy, "and let good Mrs. Charlton speak too, — ought not every objection to our union, however potent, to give way, without further hesitation, to the certainty that
that

that our intending it must become public? Who that hears of our meeting in London, at such a season, in such circumstances, and at such hours, ——”

“ And why,” cried Cecilia, angrily, “ do you mention them, and yet stay ?”

“ I *must* speak now,” answered he with quickness, “ or lose for ever all that is dear to me, and add to the misery of that loss, the heart-piercing reflection of having injured her whom of all the world I most love, most value, and most revere !”

“ And how injured ?” cried Cecilia, half alarmed and half displeased : “ Surely I must strangely have lived to fear now the voice of calumny ?”

“ If any one has ever,” returned he, “ so lived as to dare defy it, Miss Beverley is she : but though safe by the established purity of your character from calumny, there are other, and scarce less invidious attacks, from which no one is exempt, and of which the refinement, the sensibility of your mind, will render you but the more susceptible : ridicule has shafts, and impertinence has arrows, which though against innocence they may be levelled in vain, have always the power of wounding tranquility.”

Struck with a truth which she could not controvert, Cecilia sighed deeply, but spoke not.

“ Mr.

"Mr. Delvile is right;" said Mrs. Charlton, "and though your plan, my dear Cecilia, was certainly virtuous and proper, when you set out from Bury, the purpose of your journey must now be made so public, that it will no longer be judicious nor rational."

Delvile poured forth his warmest thanks for this friendly interposition, and then, strengthened by such an advocate, re-urged all his arguments with redoubled hope and spirit.

Cecilia, disturbed, uncertain, comfortless, could frame her mind to no resolution; she walked about the room, deliberated, — determined, — wavered and deliberated again. Delvile then grew more urgent, and represented so strongly the various mortifications which must follow so tardy a renunciation of their intentions, that, terrified and perplexed, and fearing the breach of their union would now be more injurious to her than its ratification, she ceased all opposition to his arguments, and uttered no words but of solicitation that he would leave her.

"I will," cried he, "I will begone this very moment. Tell me but first you will think of what I have said, and refer me not to your letter, but deign yourself to pronounce my doom, when you have considered if it may not be softened."

To this she tacitly consented; and elated with fresh rising hope, he recommended his cause to the patronage of Mrs. Charlton, and then, taking leave of Cecilia, "I go," he said, "though I have yet a thousand things to propose and to supplicate, and though still in a suspense that my temper knows ill how to endure; but I should rather be rendered miserable than happy, in merely overpowering your reason by entreaty. I leave you, therefore, to your own reflections; yet remember,——and refuse not to remember with some compunction, that all chance, all possibility of earthly happiness for *me* depends upon your decision."

He then tore himself away.

Cecilia, shocked at the fatigue she had occasioned her good old friend, now compelled her to go to rest, and dedicated the remaining part of the night to uninterrupted deliberation.

It seemed once more in her power to be mistress of her destiny; but the very liberty of choice she had so much coveted, now attained appeared the most heavy of calamities; since, uncertain even what she ought to do, she rather wished to be drawn than to lead, rather desired to be guided than to guide. She was to be responsible not only to the world but to herself for the whole of this momentous transaction, and the terror
of

of leaving either dissatisfied, made independence burthenfome, and unlimited power a grievance.

The happiness or misery which awaited her resolution were but secondary considerations in the present state of her mind; her consent to a clandestine action she lamented as an eternal blot to her character, and the undoubted publication of that consent as equally injurious to her fame. Neither retracting nor fulfilling her engagement could now retrieve what was past, and in the bitterness of regret for the error she had committed, she thought happiness unattainable for the remainder of her life.

In this gloomy despondence passed the night, her eyes never closed, her determination never formed. Morning, however, came, and upon something to fix was indispensable.

She now, therefore, finally employed herself in briefly comparing the good with the evil of giving Delville wholly up, or becoming his for-ever.

In accepting him, she was exposed to all the displeasure of his relations, and, which affected her most, to the indignant severity of his mother: but not another obstacle could be found that seemed of any weight to oppose him.

In refusing him she was liable to the derision

rision of the world, to sneers from strangers, and remonstrances from her friends, to becoming a topic for ridicule, if not for slander, and an object of curiosity if not of contempt.

The ills, therefore, that threatened her marriage, though most afflicting, were least disgraceful, and those which awaited its breach, if less serious, were more mortifying.

At length, after weighing every circumstance as well as her perturbed spirits would permit, she concluded that so late to reject him must bring misery without any alleviation, while accepting him, though followed by wrath and reproach, left some opening for future hope, and some prospect of better days.

To fulfil, therefore, her engagement was her final resolution.

C H A P. II.

AN EVENT.

SCARCE less unhappy in her decision than in her uncertainty, and every way dissatisfied with her situation, her views and herself, Cecilia was still so distressed and uncomfortable, when Delville called the next morning, that he could not discover what her determination had been, and fearfully enquired his doom with hardly any hope of finding favour.

But Cecilia was above affectation, and a stranger to art. "I would not, Sir," she said, "keep you an instant in suspense, when I am no longer in suspense myself. I may have appeared trifling, but I have been nothing less, and you would readily exculpate me of caprice, if half the distress of my irresolution was known to you. Even now, when I hesitate no more, my mind is so ill at ease, that I could neither wonder nor be displeased should you hesitate in your turn."

"You hesitate no more?" cried he, almost breathless at the sound of those words, "and is it possible—Oh my Cecilia!—

is it possible your resolution is in my favour?"

"Alas!" cried she, "how little is your reason to rejoice! a dejected and melancholy gift is all you can receive!"

"Ere I take it, then," cried he, in a voice that spoke joy, pain, and fear all at once in commotion, "tell me if your reluctance has its origin in *me*, that I may rather even yet relinquish you, than merely owe your hand to the selfishness of persecution?"

"Your pride," said she, half smiling, "has some right to be alarmed, though I meant not to alarm it. No! it is with myself only I am at variance, with my own weakness and want of judgement that I quarrel, — in *you* I have all the reliance that the highest opinion of your honour and integrity can give me."

This was enough for the warm heart of Delville, not only to restore peace, but to awaken rapture. He was almost as wild with delight, as he had before been with apprehension, and poured forth his acknowledgements with so much fervour of gratitude, that Cecilia imperceptibly grew reconciled to herself, and before she missed her dejection, participated in his contentment.

She quitted him as soon as she had power,

power, to acquaint Mrs. Charlton with what had passed, and assist in preparing her to accompany them to the altar; while Delville flew to his new acquaintance, Mr. Singleton, the lawyer, to request him to supply the place of Mr. Monckton in giving her away.

All was now hastened with the utmost expedition, and to avoid observation, they agreed to meet at the church; their desire of secrecy, however potent, never urging them to wish the ceremony should be performed in a place less awful.

When the chairs, however, came, which were to carry the two ladies thither, Cecilia trembled and hung back. The greatness of her undertaking, the hazard of all her future happiness, the disgraceful secrecy of her conduct, the expected reproaches of Mrs. Delville, and the boldness and indelicacy of the step she was about to take, all so forcibly struck, and so painfully wounded her, that the moment she was summoned to set out, she again lost her resolution, and regretting the hour that ever Delville was known to her, she sunk into a chair, and gave up her whole soul to anguish and sorrow.

The good Mrs. Charlton tried in vain to console her; a sudden horror against herself had now seized her spirits, which, ex-

hausted by long struggles, could rally no more.

In this situation she was at length surprised by Delvile, whose uneasy astonishment that she had failed in her appointment, was only to be equalled by that with which he was struck at the sight of her tears. He demanded the cause with the utmost tenderness and apprehension; Cecilia for some time could not speak, and then, with a deep sigh "Ah!" she cried, "Mr. Delvile! how weak are we all when unsupported by our own esteem! how feeble, how inconsistent, how changeable, when our courage has any foundation but duty!"

Delvile, much relieved by finding her sadness sprung not from any new affliction, gently reproached her breach of promise, and earnestly entreated her to repair it. "The clergyman," cried he, "is waiting; I have left him with Mr. Singleton in the vestry; no new objections have started, and no new obstacles have intervened; why, then, torment ourselves with discussing again the old ones, which we have already considered till every possible argument upon them is exhausted? Tranquilize, I conjure you, your agitated spirits, and if the truest tenderness, the most animated esteem, and the gratefullest admiration, can soften your future cares, and ensure your future peace, every
anniver-

anniversary of this day will recompense my Cecilia for every pang she now suffers!"

Cecilia, half soothed and half ashamed, finding she had in fact nothing new to say or to object, compelled herself to rise, and, penetrated by his sollicitations, endeavoured to compose her mind, and promised to follow him.

He would not trust her, however, from his sight, but seizing the very instant of her renewed consent, he dismissed the chairs, and ordering a hackney-coach, preferred any risk to that of her again wavering, and insisted upon accompanying her in it himself.

Cecilia had now scarce time to breathe, before she found herself at the porch of — church. Delvile hurried her out of the carriage, and then offered his arm to Mrs. Charlton. Not a word was spoken by any of the party till they went into the vestry, where Delvile ordered Cecilia a glass of water, and having hastily made his compliments to the clergyman, gave her hand to Mr. Singleton, who led her to the altar.

The ceremony was now begun; and Cecilia, finding herself past all power of retracting, soon called her thoughts from wishing it, and turned her whole attention to the awful service; to which though she listened with reverence, her full satisfaction

in the object of her vows, made her listen without terror. But when the priest came to that solemn adjuration, *If any man can shew any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together*, a conscious tear stole into her eye, and a sigh escaped from Delvile that went to her heart : but, when the priest concluded the exhortation with *let him now speak, or else hereafter for-ever hold his peace*, a female voice at some distance, called out in shrill accents, " I do !"

The ceremony was instantly stopt. The astonished priest immediately shut up the book to regard the intended bride and bridegroom ; Delvile started with amazement to see whence the sound proceeded ; and Cecilia, aghast, and struck with horror, faintly shriekt, and caught hold of Mrs. Charlton.

The consternation was general, and general was the silence, though all of one accord turned round towards the place whence the voice issued : a female form at the same moment was seen rushing from a pew, who glided out of the church with the quickness of lightning.

Not a word was yet uttered, every one seeming rooted to the spot on which he stood, and regarding in mute wonder the place this form had crossed.

Delvile

Delvile at length exclaimed "What can this mean?"

"Did you not know the woman, Sir?" said the clergyman.

"No, Sir, I did not even see her."

"Nor you, madam?" said he, addressing Cecilia.

"No, Sir," she answered, in a voice that scarce articulated the two syllables, and changing colour so frequently, that Delvile, apprehensive she would faint, flew to her, calling out "Let *me* support you!"

She turned from him hastily, and still holding by Mrs. Charlton, moved away from the altar.

"Whither," cried Delvile, fearfully following her, whither are you going?"

She made not any answer; but still, though tottering as much from emotion as Mrs. Charlton from infirmity, she walked on.

"Why did you stop the ceremony, Sir?" cried Delvile, impatiently speaking to the clergyman.

"No ceremony, Sir," he returned, "could proceed with such an interruption."

"It has been wholly accidental," cried he, "for we neither of us know the woman, who could not have any right or authority for the prohibition." Then yet

more anxiously pursuing Cecilia, "why," he continued, "do you thus move off?—Why leave the ceremony unfinished?—Mrs. Charlton, what is it you are about?—Cecilia; I beseech you return, and let the service go on!"

Cecilia, making a motion with her hand to forbid his following her, still silently proceeded, though drawing along with equal difficulty Mrs. Charlton and herself.

"This is insupportable!" cried Delvile, with vehemence, "turn, I conjure you!—my Cecilia!—my wife!—why is it you thus abandon me?—Turn, I implore you, and receive my eternal vows!—Mrs. Charlton, bring her back,—Cecilia, you *must* not go!—"

He now attempted to take her hand, but shrinking from his touch, in an emphatic but low voice, she said "Yes, Sir, I must!—an interdiction such as this!—for the world could I not brave it!"

She then made an effort to somewhat quicken her pace.

"Where," cried Delvile, half frantic, "where is this infamous woman? This wretch who has thus wantonly destroyed me!"

And he rushed out of the church in pursuit of her.

The clergyman and Mr. Singleton, who had

had hitherto, been wondering spectators, came now to offer their assistance to Cecilia. She declined any help for herself, but gladly accepted their services for Mrs. Charlton, who, thunderstruck by all that had past, seemed almost robbed of her faculties. Mr. Singleton proposed calling a hackney coach, she consented, and they stopt for it at the church porch.

The clergyman now began to enquire of the pew-opener, what she knew of the woman, who she was, and how she had got into the church? She knew of her, she answered, nothing, but that she had come in to early prayers, and she supposed she had hid herself in a pew when they were over, as she had thought the church entirely empty.

An hackney coach now drew up, and while the gentlemen were assisting Mrs. Charlton into it, Delville returned.

"I have pursued and enquired," cried he, "in vain, I can neither discover nor hear of her.—But what is all this? Whither are you going?—What does this coach do here?—Mrs. Charlton, why do you get into it?—Cecilia, what are you doing?"

Cecilia turned away from him in silence. The shock she had received, took from her all power of speech, while amazement and terror deprived her even of relief from tears. She believed Delville to blame,

though she knew not in what, but the obscurity of her fears served only to render them more dreadful.

She was now getting into the coach herself, but Delvile, who could neither brook her displeasure, nor endure her departure, forcibly caught her hand, and called out "You are *mine*, you are my *wife*! — I will part with you no more, and go whithersoever you will, I will follow and claim you!"

"Stop me not!" cried she, impatiently though faintly, "I am sick, I am ill already, — if you detain me any longer, I shall be unable to support myself!"

"Oh then rest on *me*!" cried he, still holding her; "rest but upon me till the ceremony is over! — you will drive me to despair and to madness if you leave me in this barbarous manner!"

A crowd now began to gather, and the words bride and bridegroom reached the ears of Cecilia; who half dead with shame, with fear, and with distress, hastily said "You are determined to make me miserable!" and snatching away her hand, which Delvile at those words could no longer hold, she threw herself into the carriage.

Delvile, however, jumped in after her, and with an air of authority ordered the coachman to Pall-Mall, and then drew up
the

the glasses, with a look of fierceness at the mob.

Cecilia had neither spirits nor power to resist him; yet, offended by his violence, and shocked to be thus publicly pursued by him, her looks spoke a resentment far more mortifying than any verbal reproach.

"Inhuman Cecilia!" cried he, passionately, "to desert me at the very altar!—to cast me off at the instant the most sacred rites were uniting us!—and then thus to look at me!—to treat me with this disdain at a time of such distraction!—to scorn me thus injuriously at the moment you unjustly abandon me!——"

"To how dreadful a scene," said Cecilia, recovering from her consternation, "have you exposed me! to what shame, what indignity, what irreparable disgrace!"

"Oh heaven!" cried he with horror, "if any crime, any offence of mine has occasioned this fatal blow, the whole world holds not a wretch so culpable as myself, nor one who will sooner allow the justice of your rigour! my veneration for you has ever equalled my affection, and could I think it was through *me* you have suffered any indignity, I should soon abhor myself as you seem to abhor me. But what is it I have done? How have I thus incensed you?"

By what action, by what guilt, have I incurred this displeasure?"

"Whence," cried she, "came that voice which still vibrates in my ear? The prohibition could not be on *my* account, since none to whom I am known have either right or interest in even wishing it."

"What an inference is this! over *me*, then, do you conclude this woman had any power?"

Here they stopt at the lodgings. Delvile handed both the ladies out. Cecilia, eager to avoid his importunities, and dreadfully disturbed; hastily past him, and ran up stairs; but Mrs. Charlton refused not his arm, on which she lent till they reached the drawing-room.

Cecilia then rang the bell for her servant, and gave orders that a post-chaise might be sent for immediately.

Delvile now felt offended in his turn; but suppressing his vehemence, he gravely and quietly said "Determined as you are to leave me, indifferent to my peace, and incredulous of my word, deign, at least, before we part, to be more explicit in your accusation, and tell me if indeed it is possible you can suspect that the wretch who broke off the ceremony, had ever from me received provocation for such an action?"

"I know not what to suspect," said Cecilia,

elia, "where every thing is thus involved in obscurity; but I must own I should have some difficulty to think those words the effect of chance, or to credit that their speaker was concealed without design."

"You are right, then, madam," cried he, resentfully, "to discard me! to treat me with contempt, to banish me without repugnance, since I see you believe me capable of duplicity, and imagine I am better informed in this affair than I appear to be. You have said I shall make you miserable,—no, madam, no! your happiness and misery depend not upon one you hold so worthless!"

"On whatever they depend," said Cecilia, "I am too little at ease for discussion. I would no more be daring than superstitious, but none of our proceedings have prospered, and since their privacy has always been contrary both to my judgment and my principles, I know not how to repine at a failure I cannot think unmerited. Mrs. Charlton, our chaise is coming; you will be ready, I hope, to set off in it directly?"

Delville, too angry to trust himself to speak, now walked about the room, and endeavoured to calm himself; but so little was his success, that though silent till the chaise was announced, when he heard that dreaded sound, and saw Cecilia steady in her purpose

pose of departing, he was so much shocked and afflicted, that, clasping his hands in a transport of passion and grief, he exclaimed "This, then, Cecilia, is your faith! this is the felicity you bid me hope! this is the recompense of my sufferings, and the performance of your engagement!"

Cecilia, struck by these reproaches, turned back; but while she hesitated how to answer them, he went on. "You are insensible to my misery, and impenetrable to my entreaties; a secret enemy has had power to make me odious in your sight, though for her enmity I can assign no cause, though even her existence was this morning unknown to me! Ever ready to abandon, and most willing to condemn me, you have more confidence in a vague conjecture, than in all you have observed of the whole tenour of my character. Without knowing why, you are disposed to believe me criminal, without deigning to say wherefore, you are eager to banish me your presence. Yet scarce could a consciousness of guilt itself, wound me so forcibly, so keenly, as your suspecting I am guilty!"

"Again, then," cried Cecilia, "shall I subject myself to a scene of such disgrace and horror? No, never!—The punishment of my error shall at least secure its reformation. Yet if I merit your reproaches,
I de-

I deserve not your regard; cease, therefore, to profess any for me, or make them no more."

"Shew but to them," cried he, "the smallest sensibility, shew but for me the most distant concern, and I will try to bear my disappointment without murmuring, and submit to your decrees as to those from which there is no appeal: but to wound without deigning even to look at what you destroy,—to shoot at random those arrows that are pointed with poison,—to see them fasten on the heart, and corrode its vital functions, yet look on without compunction, or turn away with cold disdain,—Oh where is the candour I thought lodged in Cecilia! where the justice, the equity, I believed a part of herself!"

"After all that has past," said Cecilia, sensibly touched by his distress, "I expected not these complaints, nor that, from me, any assurances would be wanted; yet, if it will quiet your mind, if it will better reconcile you to our separation——"

"Oh fatal prelude!" interrupted he, "what on earth can quiet my mind that leads to our separation? — Give to me no condescension with any such view,—preserve your indifference, persevere in your coldness, triumph still in your power of inspiring those feelings you can never return,
—all,

— all, every thing is more supportable than to talk of our separation!”

“ Yet how,” cried she, “ parted, torn asunder as we have been, how is it now to be avoided?”

“ Trust in my honour! Shew me but the confidence which I will venture to say I deserve, and then will that union no longer be impeded, which in future, I am certain, will never be repented!”

“ Good heaven, what a request! faith so implicit would be frenzy.”

“ You doubt, then, my integrity? You suspect——”

“ Indeed I do not; yet in a case of such importance, what ought to guide me but my own reason, my own conscience, my own sense of right? Pain me not, therefore, with reproaches, distress me no more with entreaties, when I solemnly declare that no earthly consideration shall ever again make me promise you my hand, while the terror of Mrs. Delville’s displeasure has possession of my heart. And now adieu.”

“ You give me, then, up?”

“ Be patient, I beseech you; and attempt not to follow me; tis a step I cannot permit.”

“ Not follow you? And who has power to prevent me?”

“ I have, Sir, if to incur my endless resentment

sentment is of any consequence to you."

She then, with an air of determined steadiness, moved on; Mrs. Charlton, assisted by the servants, being already upon the stairs.

"O tyranny!" cried he, "what submission is it you exact! — May I not even enquire into the dreadful mystery of this morning?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And may I not acquaint you with it, should it be discovered?"

"I shall not be sorry to hear it. Adieu."

She was now half way down the stairs; when, losing all forbearance, he hastily flew after her, and endeavouring to stop her, called out, "If you do not hate and detest me,—if I am not loathsome and abhorrent to you, O quit me not thus insensibly! — Cecilia! my beloved Cecilia! — speak to me, at least, one word of less severity! Look at me once more, and tell me we part not for-ever!"

Cecilia then turned round, and while a starting tear shewed her sympathetic distress, said, "Why will you thus oppress me with entreaties I ought not to gratify?—Have I not accompanied you to the altar,—and can you doubt what I have thought of you?"

"*Have* thought? — Oh Cecilia! — is it then all over?"

"Pray

“ Pray suffer me to go quietly, and fear not I shall go too happily! Suppress your own feelings, rather than seek to awaken mine. Alas! there is little occasion! —— Oh Mr. Delville! were our connexion opposed by no duty, and repugnant to no friends, were it attended by no impropriety, and carried on with no necessity of disguise, —— you would not thus charge me with indifference, you would not suspect me of insensibility, —— Oh no! the choice of my heart would then be its glory, and all I now blush to feel, I should openly and with pride acknowledge!”

She then hurried to the chaise, Delville pursuing her with thanks and blessings, and gratefully assuring her, as he handed her into it, that he would obey all her injunctions; and not even attempt to see her, till he could bring her some intelligence concerning the morning's transaction.

The chaise then drove off.

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

A CONSTERNATION.

THE journey was melancholy and tedious: Mrs. Charlton, extremely fatigued by the unusual hurry and exercise both of mind and body which she had lately gone through, was obliged to travel very slowly, and to lie upon the road. Cecilia, however, was in no haste to proceed: she was going to no one she wished to see, she was wholly without expectation of meeting with any thing that could give her pleasure. The unfortunate expedition in which she had been engaged, left her now nothing but regret, and only promised her in future sorrow and mortification.

Mrs. Charlton, after her return home, still continued ill, and Cecilia, who constantly attended her, had the additional affliction of imputing her indisposition to herself. Every thing she thought conspired to punish the error she had committed; her proceedings were discovered, though her motives were unknown; the Delville family could not fail to hear of her enterprize, and while they attributed it to her temerity,

rity, they would exult in its failure: but chiefly hung upon her mind the unaccountable prohibition of her marriage. Whence that could proceed she was wholly without ability to divine, yet her surmises were not more fruitless than various. At one moment she imagined it some frolic of Morrice, at another some perfidy of Monckton, and at another an idle and unmeaning trick of some stranger to them all. But none of these suppositions carried with them any air of probability; Morrice, even if he had watched their motions and pursued them to the church, which his inquisitive impertinence made by no means impossible, could yet hardly have had either time or opportunity to engage any woman in so extraordinary an undertaking; Mr. Monckton, however averse to the connection, she considered as a man of too much honour to break it off in a manner so alarming and disgraceful; and mischief so wanton in any stranger, seemed to require a share of unfeeling effrontery, which could fall to the lot of so few as to make this suggestion unnatural and incredible.

Sometimes she imagined that Delvile might formerly have been affianced to some woman, who, having accidentally discovered his intentions, took this desperate method of rendering them abortive: but this was a short-

short-lived thought, and speedily gave way to her esteem for his general character, and her confidence in the firmness of his probity.

All, therefore, was dark and mysterious; conjecture was baffled, and meditation was useless. Her opinions were unfixed, and her heart was miserable; she could only be steady in believing Delvile as unhappy as herself, and only find consolation in believing him, also, as blameless.

Three days passed thus, without incident or intelligence; her time wholly occupied in attending Mrs. Charlton; her thoughts all engrossed upon her own situation: but upon the fourth day she was informed that a lady was in the parlour, who desired to speak with her.

She presently went down stairs, — and, upon entering the room, perceived Mrs. Delvile!

Seized with astonishment and fear, she stood short, and, looking aghast, held by the door, robbed of all power to receive so unexpected and unwelcome a visitor, by an internal sensation of guilt, mingled with a dread of discovery and reproach.

Mrs. Delvile, addressing her with the coldest politeness, said, “I fear I have surprised you; I am sorry I had not time
to

to acquaint you of my intention to wait upon you."

Cecilia then, moving from the door, faintly answered, "I cannot, madam, but be honoured by your notice, whenever you are pleased to confer it."

They then sat down; Mrs. Delvile preserving an air the most formal and distant, and Cecilia half sinking with apprehensive dismay.

After a short and ill-boding silence, "I mean not," said Mrs. Delvile, "to embarrass or distress you; I will not, therefore, keep you in suspense of the purport of my visit. I come not to make enquiries, I come not to put your sincerity to any trial, nor to torture your delicacy; I dispense with all explanation, for I have not one doubt to solve: I *know* what has passed, I *know* that my son loves you."

Not all her secret alarm, nor all the perturbation of her fears, had taught Cecilia to expect so direct an attack, nor enabled her to bear the shock of it with any composure: she could not speak, she could not look at Mrs. Delvile; she arose, and walked to the window, without knowing what she was doing.

Here, however, her distress was not likely to diminish; for the first sight she saw was

Fidel,

Fidel, who barked, and jumped up at the window to lick her hands.

"Good God! Fidel here!" exclaimed Mrs. Delvile, amazed.

Cecilia, totally overpowered, covered her glowing face with both her hands, and sunk into a chair.

Mrs. Delvile for a few minutes was silent; and then, following her, said, "Imagine not I am making any discovery, nor suspect me of any design to develop your sentiments. That Mortimer could love in vain I never believed; that Miss Beverley, possessing so much merit, could be blind to it in another, I never thought possible. I mean not, therefore, to solicit any account or explanation, but merely to beg your patience while I talk to you myself, and your permission to speak to you with openness and truth."

Cecilia, though relieved by this calmness from all apprehension of reproach, found in her manner a coldness that convinced her of the loss of her affection, and in the introduction to her business a solemnity that assured her what she should decree would be unalterable. She uncovered her face to shew her respectful attention, but she could not raise it up, and could not utter a word.

Mrs. Delville then seated herself next her, and gravely continued her discourse.

“ Miss Beverley, however little acquainted with the state of our family affairs, can scarcely have been uninformed that a fortune such as hers seems almost all that family can desire; nor can she have failed to observe, that her merit and accomplishments have no where been more felt and admired: the choice therefore of Mortimer she could not doubt would have our sanction, and when she honoured his proposals with her favour, she might naturally conclude she gave happiness and pleasure to all his friends.”

Cecilia, superior to accepting a palliation of which she felt herself undeserving, now lifted up her head, and forcing herself to speak, said “ No, madam, I will not deceive you, for I have never been deceived myself: I presumed not to expect your approbation, — though in missing it I have for ever lost my own!”

“ Has Mortimer, then,” cried she with eagerness, “ been strictly honourable? has he neither beguiled nor betrayed you?”

“ No, madam,” said she, blushing, “ I have nothing to reproach him with.”

“ Then he is indeed my son!” cried Mrs. Delville, with emotion; “ had he been treacherous to you, while disobedient to us, I had indisputably renounced him.”

Cecilia, who now seemed the only culprit, felt herself in a state of humiliation not to be borne; she collected, therefore, all her courage, and said, "I have cleared Mr. Delville; permit me, madam, now, to say something for myself."

"Certainly; you cannot oblige me more than by speaking without disguise."

"It is not in the hope of regaining your good opinion, — that, I see, is lost! — but merely —"

"No, not lost," said Mrs. Delville, "but if once it was yet higher, the fault was my own, in indulging an expectation of perfection to which human nature is perhaps unequal."

Ah, then, thought Cecilia, all is over! the contempt I so much feared is incurred, and though it may be softened, it can never be removed!

"Speak, then, and with sincerity," she continued, "all you wish me to hear; and then grant me your attention in return to the purpose of my present journey."

"I have little, madam," answered the depressed Cecilia, "to say; you tell me you already know all that has passed; I will not, therefore, pretend to take any merit from revealing it; I will only add, that my consent to this transaction has made me miserable almost from the moment I gave

it; that I meant, and wished to retract as soon as reflection pointed out to me my error, and that circumstances the most perverse, not blindness to propriety, nor stubbornness in wrong, led me to make, at last, that fatal attempt, of which the recollection, to my last hour, must fill me with regret and shame."

"I wonder not," said Mrs. Delvile, "that in a situation where delicacy was so much less requisite than courage, Miss Beverley should feel herself distressed and unhappy. A mind such as hers could never err with impunity; and it is solely from a certainty of her innate sense of right, that I venture to wait upon her now, and that I have any hope to influence *her* upon whose influence alone our whole family must in future depend. Shall I now proceed, or is there any thing you wish to say first?"

"No, madam, nothing."

"Hear me, then, I beg of you, with no pre-determination to disregard me, but with an equitable resolution to attend to reason, and a candour that leaves an opening to conviction. Not easy, indeed, is such a task, to a mind pre-occupied with an intention to be guided by the dictates of inclination, —"

"You wrong me, indeed, madam!" interrupted

interrupted Cecilia, greatly hurt, "my mind harbours no such intention, it has no desire but to be guided by duty, it is wretched with a consciousness of having failed in it! I pine, I sicken to recover my own good opinion; I should then no longer feel unworthy of yours; and whether or not I might be able to regain it, I should at least lose this cruel depression that now sinks me in your presence!"

"To regain it," said Mrs. Delvile, "were to exercise but half your power, which at this moment enables you, if such is your wish, to make me think of you more highly than one human being ever thought of another. Do you condescend to hold this worth your while?"

Cecilia started at the question; her heart beat quick with struggling passions; she saw the sacrifice which was to be required, and her pride, her affronted pride, arose high to anticipate the rejection; but the design was combated by her affections, which opposed the indignant rashness, and told her that one hasty speech might separate her from Delvile for ever. When this painful conflict was over, of which Mrs. Delvile patiently waited the issue, she answered, with much hesitation, "To regain your good opinion, madam, greatly, truly as I value it, — is what I now scarcely dare hope."

"Say not so," cried she, "since, if you hope, you cannot miss it. I purpose to point out to you the means to recover it, and to tell you how greatly I shall think myself your debtor if you refuse not to employ them."

She stooped; but Cecilia hung back; fearful of her own strength, she dared venture at no professions; yet, how either to support, or dispute her compliance, she dreaded to think.

"I come to you, then," Mrs. Delvile solemnly resumed, "in the name of Mr. Delvile, and in the name of our whole family; a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient. Consider me as its representative, and hear in me its common voice, common opinion, and common address.

"My son, the supporter of our house, the sole guardian of its name, and the heir of our united fortunes, has selected you, we know, for the lady of his choice, and so fondly has fixed upon you his affections, that he is ready to relinquish us all in preference to subduing them. To yourself alone, then, can we apply, and I come to you —"

"O hold, madam, hold!" interrupted Cecilia, whose courage now revived from dejection; "I know what you would say; you

you come to tell me of your disdain; you come to reproach my presumption, and to kill me with your contempt! There is little occasion for such a step; I am depressed, I am self-condemned already: spare me, therefore, this insupportable humiliation, wound me not with your scorn, oppress me not with your superiority! I aim at no competition, I attempt no vindication, I acknowledge my own littleness as readily as you can despise it, and nothing but indignity could urge me to defend it!"

"Believe me," said Mrs. Delvile, "I meant not to hurt or offend you, and I am sorry if I have appeared to you either arrogant or assuming. The peculiar and perilous situation of my family has perhaps betrayed me into offensive expressions, and made me guilty myself of an ostentation which in others has often disgusted me. Ill, indeed, can we any of us bear the test of experiment, when tried upon those subjects which call forth our particular propensities. We may strive to be disinterested, we may struggle to be impartial, but self will still predominate, still shew us the imperfection of our natures, and the narrowness of our souls. Yet acquit me, I beg, of any intentional insolence, and imagine not that in speaking highly of my own family, I mean to depreciate yours:

on the contrary, I know it to be respectable, I know, too, that were it the lowest in the kingdom, the first might envy it that it gave birth to such a daughter."

Cecilia, somewhat soothed by this speech, begged her pardon for having interrupted her, and she proceeded.

"To your family, then, I assure you, whatever may be the pride of our own, *you* being its offspring, we would not object. With your merit we are all well acquainted, your character has our highest esteem, and your fortune exceeds even our most sanguine desires. Strange at once and afflicting! that not all these requisites for the satisfaction of prudence, nor all these allurements for the gratification of happiness, can suffice to fulfil or to silence the claims of either! There are yet other demands to which we must attend, demands which ancestry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they assert their rights with the authority of prescription, they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination, or stoop to interest, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for redress, should their noble and long unfulfilled name be voluntarily consigned to oblivion!"

Cecilia, extremely struck by these words,
scarce

scarce wondered, since so strong and so established were her opinions, that the obstacle to her marriage, though but one, should be considered as insuperable.

"Not, therefore, to *your* name are we averse," she continued, "but simply to our own more partial. To sink that, indeed, in *any* other, were base and unworthy:—what, then, must be the shock of my disappointment, should Mortimer Delville, the darling of my hopes, the last survivor of his house, in whose birth I rejoiced as the promise of its support, in whose accomplishments I gloried, as the revival of its lustre, — should *be*, should *my* son be the first to abandon it! to give up the name he seemed born to make live, and to cause in effect its utter annihilation! — Oh how should I know my son when an alien to his family! how bear to think I had cherished in my bosom the betrayer of its dearest interests, the destroyer of its very existence!"

Cecilia, scarce more afflicted than offended, now hastily answered, "Not for me, madam, shall he commit this crime, not on *my* account shall he be reprobated by his family! Think of him, therefore, no more, with any reference to me, for I would not be the cause of unworthiness or guilt in him to be mistress of the universe!"

"Nobly said!" cried Mrs. Delville, her
I 4 eyes

eyes sparkling with joy, and her cheeks glowing with pleasure, "now again do I know Miss Beverley! now again see the refined, the excellent young woman, whose virtues taught me to expect the renunciation even of her own happiness, when found to be incompatible with her duty!"

Cecilia now trembled and turned pale; she scarce knew herself what she had said, but, she found by Mrs. Delvile's construction of her words, they had been regarded as her final relinquishing of her son. She ardently wished to quit the room before she was called upon to confirm the sentence, but she had not courage to make the effort, nor to rise, speak, or move.

"I grieve, indeed," continued Mrs. Delvile, whose coldness and austerity were changed into mildness and compassion, "at the necessity I have been under to draw from you a concurrence so painful; but no other resource was in my power. My influence with Mortimer, whatever it may be, I have not any right to try, without obtaining your previous consent, since I regard him myself as bound to you in honour, and only to be released by your own virtuous desire. I will leave you, however, for my presence, I see, is oppressive to you. Farewell; and when you *can* forgive me, I think you *will*."

"I

"I have nothing, madam," said Cecilia, coldly, "to forgive; you have only asserted your own dignity, and I have nobody to blame but myself, for having given you occasion."

"Alas," cried Mrs. Delville, "if worth and nobleness of soul on your part, if esteem and tenderest affection on mine, were all which that dignity which offends you requires, how should I crave the blessing of such a daughter! how rejoice in joining my son to excellence so like his own, and ensuring his happiness while I stimulated his virtue!"

"Do not talk to me of affection, madam," said Cecilia, turning away from her; "whatever you had for me is past,—even your esteem is gone,—you may pity me, indeed, but your pity is mixed with contempt, and I am not so abject as to find comfort from exciting it."

"O little," cried Mrs. Delville, looking at her with the utmost tenderness, "little do you see the state of my heart, for never have you appeared to me so worthy as at this moment! In tearing you from my son, I partake all the wretchedness I give, but your own sense of duty must something plead for the strictness with which I act up to mine."

She then moved towards the door.

"Is your carriage, madam," said Cecilia,
I 5
struggling

struggling to disguise her inward anguish under an appearance of fullness, "in waiting?"

Mrs. Delvile then came back, and holding out her hand, while her eyes glistened with tears, said, "To part from you thus frigidly, while my heart so warmly admires you, is almost more than I can endure. Oh gentlest Cecilia! condemn not a mother who is impelled to this severity, who performing what she holds to be her duty, thinks the office her bitterest misfortune, who foresees in the rage of her husband, and the resistance of her son, all the misery of domestic contention, and who can only secure the honour of her family by destroying its peace!—You will not, then, give me your hand?—"

Cecilia, who had affected not to see that she waited for it, now coldly put it out, distantly courtesying, and seeking to preserve her steadiness by avoiding to speak. Mrs. Delvile took it, and as she repeated her adieu, affectionately pressed it to her lips; Cecilia, starting, and breathing short, from increasing yet smothered agitation, called out "Why, why this condescension?—pray,—I entreat you, madam!—"

"Heaven bless you, my love!" said Mrs. Delvile, dropping a tear upon the hand she still held, "heaven bless you,
I
and

and restore the tranquillity you so nobly deserve!"

"Ah madam!" cried Cecilia, vainly striving to repress any longer the tears which now forced their way down her cheeks, "why will you break my heart with this kindness! why will you still compel me to love, — when now I almost wish to hate you! —"

"No, hate me not," said Mrs. Delvile, kissing from her cheeks the tears that watered them, "hate me not, sweetest Cecilia, though in wounding your gentle bosom, I am almost detestable to myself. Even the cruel scene which awaits me with my son will not more deeply afflict me. But adieu, — I must now prepare for him!"

She then left the room: but Cecilia, whose pride had no power to resist this tenderness, ran hastily after her, saying "Shall I not see you again, madam?"

"You shall yourself decide," answered she; "if my coming will not give you more pain than pleasure, I will wait upon you whenever you please."

Cecilia sighed and paused; she knew not what to desire, yet rather wished any thing to be done, than quietly to sit down to uninterrupted reflection.

"Shall I postpone quitting this place," continued Mrs. Delvile, "till to-morrow morning,

morning, and will you admit me this afternoon, should I call upon you again?"

"I should be sorry," said she, still hesitating, "to detain you, —"

"You will rejoice me," cried Mrs. Delville, "by bearing me in your sight."

And she then went into her carriage.

Cecilia, unfitted to attend her old friend, and unequal to the task of explaining to her the cruel scene in which she had just been engaged, then hastened to her own apartment. Her hitherto stifled emotions broke forth in tears and repinings: her fate was finally determined, and its determination was not more unhappy than humiliating; she was openly rejected by the family whose alliance she was known to wish; she was compelled to refuse the man of her choice, though satisfied his affections were her own. A misery so peculiar she found hard to support, and almost bursting with conflicting passions, her heart alternately swelled from offended pride, and sunk from disappointed tenderness.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

A PERTURBATION.

CECILIA was still in this tempestuous state, when a message was brought her that a gentleman was below stairs, who begged to have the honour of seeing her. She concluded he was Delvile, and the thought of meeting him merely to communicate what must so bitterly afflict him, redoubled her distress, and she went down in an agony of perturbation and sorrow.

He met her at the door, where, before he could speak, "Mr. Delvile," she cried, in a hurrying manner, "why will you come? Why will you thus insist upon seeing me, in defiance of every obstacle, and in contempt of my prohibition?"

"Good heavens," cried he, amazed, "whence this reproach? Did you not permit me to wait upon you with the result of my enquiries? Had I not your consent—but why do you look thus disturbed?—Your eyes are red, — you have been weeping. — Oh my Cecilia! have I any share in your sorrow?—Those tears, which never flow
weakly,

weakly, tell me, have they——has *one* of them been shed upon my account?"

"And what," cried she, "has been the result of *your* enquiries?—Speak quick, for I wish to know,——and in another instant I must be gone."

"How strange," cried the astonished Delville, "is this language! how strange are these looks! What new has come to pass? Has any fresh calamity happened? Is there yet some evil which I do not expect?"

"Why will you not answer first?" cried she; "When *I* have spoken, you will perhaps be less willing."

"You terrify, you shock, you amaze me! What dreadful blow awaits me! For what horror are you preparing me?—That which I have just experienced, and which tore you from me even at the foot of the altar, still remains inexplicable, still continues to be involved in darkness and mystery; for the wretch who separated us I have never been able to discover."

"Have you procured, then, no-intelligence?"

"No, none; though since we parted I have never rested a moment."

"Make, then, no further enquiry, for now all explanation would be useless. That we *were* parted, we know, though *why* we cannot

cannot tell: but that again we shall ever meet——”

She stopt; her streaming eyes cast upwards, and a deep sigh bursting from her heart.

“ Oh what,” cried Delville, endeavouring to take her hand, which she hastily withdrew from him, “ what does this mean? Loveliest, dearest Cecilia, my betrothed, my affianced wife! why flow those tears which agony only can wring from you? Why refuse me that hand which so lately was the pledge of your faith? Am I not the same Delville to whom so few days since you gave it? Why will you not open to him your heart? Why thus distrust his honour, and repulse his tenderness? Oh why, giving him such exquisite misery, refuse him the smallest consolation?”

“ What consolation,” cried the weeping Cecilia, “ can I give?” Alas! it is not, perhaps, *you* who most want it!——”

Here the door was opened by one of the Miss Charltons, who came into the room with a message from her grand-mother, requesting to see Cecilia. Cecilia, ashamed of being thus surprised with Delville, and in tears, waited not either to make any excuse to him, or any answer to Miss Charlton, but instantly hurried out of the room;—not, however, to her old friend, whom now less than

than ever she could meet, but to her own apartment, where a very short indulgence of grief was succeeded by the severest examination of her own conduct.

A retrospection of this sort rarely brings much subject of exultation, when made with the rigid sincerity of secret impartiality: so much stronger is our reason than our virtue, so much higher our sense of duty than our performance!

All she had done she now repented, all she had said she disapproved; her conduct, seldom equal to her notions of right, was now infinitely below them, and the reproaches of her judgment made her forget for a while the afflictions which had missed it.

The sorrow to which she had openly given way in the presence of Delville, though their total separation but the moment before had been finally decreed, she considered as a weak effusion of tenderness, injurious to delicacy, and censurable by propriety. "His power over my heart," cried she, "it were now, indeed, too late to conceal, but his power over my understanding it is time to cancel. I am not to be his,—my own voice has ratified the renunciation, and since I made it to his mother, it must never, without her consent, be invalidated. Honour, therefore, to her, and
regard

regard for myself; equally command me to fly him, till I cease to be thus affected by his sight."

When Delvile, therefore, sent up an entreaty that he might be again admitted into her presence, she returned for answer that she was not well, and could not see any body.

He then left the house, and, in a few minutes, she received the following note, from him.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

YOU drive me from you, Cecilia, tortured with suspense, and distracted with apprehension,—you drive me from you, certain of my misery, yet leaving me to bear it as I may! I would call you unfeeling, but that I saw you were unhappy; I would reproach you with tyranny, but that your eyes when you quitted me were swollen with weeping! I go, therefore, I obey the harsh mandate, since my absence is your desire, and I will shut myself up at Biddulph's till I receive your commands. Yet disdain not to reflect that every instant will seem endless, while Cecilia must appear to me unjust, or wound my very soul by the recollection of her in sorrow.

MORTIMER DELVILE.

The

The mixture of fondness and resentment with which this letter was dictated, marked so strongly the sufferings and disordered state of the writer, that all the softness of Cecilia returned when she perused it, and left her not a wish but to lessen his inquietude, by assurances of unalterable regard: yet she determined not to trust herself in his sight, certain they could only meet to grieve over each other, and conscious that a participation of sorrow would but prove a reciprocation of tenderness. Calling, therefore, upon her duty to resist her inclination, she resolved to commit the whole affair to the will of Mrs. Delvile, to whom, though under no promise, she now considered herself responsible. Desirous, however, to shorten the period of Delvile's uncertainty, she would not wait till the time she had appointed to see his mother, but wrote the following note to hasten their meeting.

To the Hon. Mrs. DELVILE.

Madam,

Your son is now at Bury; shall I acquaint him of your arrival? or will you announce it yourself? Inform me of your desire, and I will endeavour to fulfil it. As my own Agent I regard myself no longer; if, as
yours,

yours, I can give pleasure, or be of service,
I shall gladly receive your commands. I
have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient servant,

CECILIA BEVERLEY.

When she had sent off this letter, her heart was more at ease, because reconciled with her conscience: she had sacrificed the son, she had resigned herself to the mother; it now only remained to heal her wounded pride, by suffering the sacrifice with dignity, and to recover her tranquillity in virtue, by making the resignation without repining.

Her reflections, too, growing clearer as the mist of passion was dispersed, she recollected with confusion her cold and sullen behaviour to Mrs. Dolvile. That lady had but done what she had believed was her duty, and that duty was no more than she had been taught to expect from her. In the beginning of her visit, and while doubtful of its success, she had indeed, been austere, but the moment victory appeared in view, she became tender, affectionate and gentle. Her justice, therefore, condemned the resentment to which she had given way, and she fortified her mind for
the

the interview which was to follow, by an earnest desire to make réparation both to Mrs. Delvile and herself for that which was past.

In this resolution she was not a little strengthened, by seriously considering with herself the great abatement to all her possible happiness, which must have been made by the humiliating circumstance of forcing herself into a family which held all connection with her as disgraceful. She desired not to be the wife even of Delvile upon such terms, for the more she esteemed and admired him, the more anxious she became for his honour, and the less could she endure being regarded herself as the occasion of its diminution.

Now, therefore, her plan of conduct settled, with calmer spirits, though a heavy heart, she attended upon Mrs. Charlton; but fearing to lose the steadiness she had just acquired before it should be called upon, if she trusted herself to relate the decision which had been made, she besought her for the present to dispense with the account, and then forced herself into conversation upon less interesting subjects.

This prudence had its proper effect, and with tolerable tranquility she heard Mrs. Delvile again announced, and waited upon her

her in the parlour with an air of composure.

Not so did Mrs. Delvile receive her; she was all eagerness and emotion; she flew to her the moment she appeared, and throwing her arms around her, warmly exclaimed "Oh charming girl! Saver of our family! preserver of our honour! How poor are words to express my admiration! how inadequate are thanks in return for such obligations as I owe you!"

"You owe me none, madam," said Cecilia, suppressing a sigh; "on *my* side will be all the obligation, if you can pardon the petulance of my behaviour this morning."

"Call not by so harsh a name," answered Mrs. Delvile, "the keenness of a sensibility by which you have yourself alone been the sufferer. You have had a trial the most severe, and however able to sustain, it was impossible you should not feel it. That you should give up *any* man whose friends solicit not your alliance, your mind is too delicate to make wonderful; but your generosity in submitting, unasked, the arrangement of that resignation to those for whose interest it is made, and your high sense of honour in holding yourself accountable to *me*, though under no tie, and bound by no promise, mark a greatness of mind which
calls

calls for reverence rather than thanks, and which I never can praise half so much as I admire."

Cecilia, who received this applause but as a confirmation of her rejection, thanked her only by courtlying; and Mrs. Delvile, having seated herself next her, continued her speech.

"My son, you have the goodness to tell me, is here,—have you seen him?"

"Yes, madam," answered she, blushing; "but hardly for a moment."

"And he knows not of my arrival?"

"No, — I believe he certainly does not."

"Sad, then, is the trial which awaits him, and heavy for me the office I must perform! Do you expect to see him again?"

"No, — yes, — perhaps — indeed I hardly—"

She stammered, and Mrs. Delvile, taking her hand, said "Tell me, Miss Beverley, *why* should you see him again?"

Cecilia was thunderstruck by this question, and, colouring yet more deeply, looked down, but could not answer.

"Consider," continued Mrs. Delvile, "the *purpose* of any further meeting; your union is impossible, you have nobly consented to relinquish all thoughts of it: why then tear your own heart, and torture his,

his, by an intercourse which seems nothing but an ill-judged invitation to fruitless and unavailing sorrow?"

Cecilia was still silent; the truth of the expostulation her reason acknowledged, but to assent to its consequence her whole heart refused.

"The ungenerous triumph of little female vanity," said Mrs. Delvile, "is far, I am sure, from your mind, of which the enlargement and liberality will rather find consolation from lessening than from imbittering his sufferings. Speak to me, then, and tell me, honestly, judiciously, candidly tell me,—will it not be wiser and more right, to avoid rather than seek an object which can only give birth to regret? an interview which can excite no sensations but of misery and sadness?"

Cecilia then turned pale, she endeavoured to speak, but could not; she wished to comply,—yet to think she had seen him for the last time, to remember how abruptly she had parted from him, and to fear she had treated him unkindly;—these were obstacles which opposed her concurrence, though both judgment and propriety demanded it.

"Can you, then," said Mrs. Delvile, after a pause, "can you wish to see Mortimer merely to behold his grief? Can you desire

desire he should see you, only to sharpen his affliction at your loss?"

O no!" cried Cecilia, to whom this reproof restored speech and resolution, "I am not so despicable, I am not, I hope, so unworthy!—I will be ruled by you wholly; I will commit to you every thing;—yet *once*, perhaps,—no more!——"

"Ah, my dear Miss Beverley! to meet confessedly for *once*,—what were that but planting a dagger in the heart of Mortimer? What were it but infusing poison into your own?"

"If you think so, madam," said she, "I had better—I will certainly—" she sighed, stammered, and stopt.

"Hear me," cried Mrs. Deville, "and rather let me try to convince than persuade you. Were there any possibility, by argument, by reflection, or even by accident, to remove the obstacles to our connection, then would it be well to meet, for then might discussion turn to account, and an interchange of sentiments be productive of some happy expedient: but here—"

She hesitated, and Cecilia, shocked and ashamed, turned away her face, and cried "I know, madam, what you would say, — here all is over! and therefore——"

"Yet suffer me," interrupted she, "to be explicit, since we speak upon this matter

now for the last time. Here, then, I say, where not ONE doubt remains, where ALL is finally, though not happily decided, what can an interview produce? Mischief of every sort, pain, horror, and repining! To Mortimer you may think it would be kind, and grant it to his prayers, as an alleviation of his misery; mistaken notion! nothing could so greatly augment it. All his passions would be raised, all his prudence would be extinguished, his soul would be torn with resentment and regret, and force, only, would part him from you, when previously he knew that parting was to be eternal. To yourself——”

“Talk not, madam, of *me*,” cried the unhappy Cecilia, “what you say of your son is sufficient, and I will yield——”

“Yet hear me,” proceeded she, “and believe me not so unjust as to consider him alone; you, also, would be an equal, though a less stormy sufferer. You fancy, at this moment, that once more to meet him would soothe your uneasiness, and that to take of him a farewell, would soften the pain of the separation: how false such reasoning! how dangerous such consolation! acquainted ere you meet that you were to meet him no more; your heart would be all softness and grief, and at the very moment when tenderness should be banished from your in-

tercourse, it would bear down all opposition of judgment, spirit, and dignity: you would hang upon every word, because every word would seem the last; every look, every expression would be rivetted in your memory, and his image in this parting distress would be painted upon your mind, in colours that would eat into its peace, and perhaps never be erased."

"Enough, enough," said Cecilia, "I will not see him,—I will not even desire it!"

"Is this compliance or conviction? Is what I have said true, or only terrifying?"

"Both, both! I believe, indeed, the conflict would have overpowered me.—I see you are right,—and I thank you, madam, for saving me from a scene I might so cruelly have rued."

"Oh Daughter of my mind!" cried Mrs. Delvile, rising and embracing her, "noble, generous, yet gentle Cecilia! what tie, what connection, could make you more dear to me? Who is there like you? Who half-so excellent? So open to reason, so ingenuous in error! so rational! so just! so feeling, yet so wise!"

"You are very good," said Cecilia, with a forced serenity, "and I am thankful that your resentment for the past obstructs not your lenity for the present."

"Alas,

“ Alas, my love, how shall I resent the past, when I ought myself to have foreseen this calamity! and I *should* have foreseen it, had I not been informed you were engaged, and upon your engagement built our security. Else had I been more alarmed, for my own admiration would have bid me look forward to my son’s. You were just, indeed, the woman he had least chance to resist, you were precisely the character to seize his very soul. To a softness the most fatally alluring, you join a dignity which rescues from their own contempt even the most humble of your admirers. You seem born to have all the world with your exaltation, and no part of it murmur at your superiority. Were any obstacle but this insuperable one in the way, should nobles, nay, should princes offer their daughters to my election, I would reject without murmuring the most magnificent proposals, and take in triumph to my heart my son’s nobler choice!”

“ Oh madam,” cried Cecilia, “ talk not to me thus!—speak not such flattering words!—ah, rather scorn and upbraid me, tell me you despise my character, my family and my connections,—load, load me with contempt, but do not thus torture me with approbation!”

“ Pardon me, sweetest girl, if I have awakened those emotions you so wisely seek

to subdue. May my son but emulate your example, and my pride in his virtue shall be the solace of my affliction for his misfortunes."

She then tenderly embraced her, and abruptly took her leave.

Cecilia had now acted her part, and acted it to her own satisfaction; but the curtain dropt when Mrs. Delville left the house, nature resumed her rights, and the sorrow of her heart was no longer disguised or repressed. Some faint ray of hope had till now broke through the gloomiest cloud of her misery, and secretly flattered her that its dispersion was possible, though distant: but that ray was extinct, that hope was no more; she had solemnly promised to banish Delville her sight, and his mother had absolutely declared that even the subject had been discussed for the last time.

Mrs. Charlton, impatient of some explanation of the morning's transactions, soon sent again to beg Cecilia would come to her. Cecilia reluctantly obeyed, for she feared encreasing her indisposition by the intelligence she had to communicate; she struggled, therefore, to appear to her with tolerable calmness, and in briefly relating what had passed, forbore to mingle with the narrative her own feelings and unhappiness.

Mrs.

Mrs. Charlton heard the account with the utmost concern; she accused Mrs. Delville of severity, and even of cruelty; she lamented the strange accident by which the marriage ceremony had been stopt, and regretted that it had not again been begun, as the only means to have rendered ineffectual the present fatal interposition.

But the grief of Cecilia, however violent, induced her not to join in this regret: she mourned only the obstacle which had occasioned the separation, and not the incident which had merely interrupted the ceremony: convinced, by the conversations in which she had just been engaged, of Mrs. Delville's inflexibility, she rather rejoiced than repined that she had put it to no nearer trial: sorrow was all she felt; for her mind was too liberal to harbour resentment against a conduct which she saw was dictated by a sense of right; and too ductile and too affectionate to remain unmoved by the personal kindness which had softened the rejection, and the many marks of esteem and regard which had shewn her it was lamented, though considered as indispensable.

How and by whom this affair had been betrayed to Mrs. Delville she knew not; but the discovery was nothing less than surprising, since, by various unfortunate accidents,

cidents, it was known to so many, and since, in the horror and confusion of the mysterious prohibition to the marriage, neither Delville nor herself had thought of even attempting to give any caution to the witnesses of that scene, not to make it known: an attempt, however, which must almost necessarily have been unavailing, as the incident was too extraordinary and too singular to have any chance of suppression.

During this conversation, one of the servants came to inform Cecilia, that a man was below to enquire if there was no answer to the note he had brought in the forenoon.

Cecilia, greatly distressed, knew not upon what to resolve; that the patience of Delville should be exhausted, she did not, indeed, wonder, and to relieve his anxiety was now almost her only wish; she would therefore instantly have written to him, confessed her sympathy in his sufferings, and besought him to endure with fortitude an evil which was no longer to be withstood: but she was uncertain whether he was yet acquainted with the journey of his mother to Bury, and having agreed to commit to her the whole management of the affair, she feared it would be dishonourable to take any step in it without her concurrence. She returned, therefore,

therefore, a message that she had yet no answer ready.

In a very few minutes Delvile called himself, and sent up an earnest request for permission to see her.

Here, at least, she had no perplexity; an interview she had given her positive word to refuse, and therefore, without a moment's hesitation, she bid the servant inform him she was particularly engaged, and sorry it was not in her power to see any company.

In the greatest perturbation he left the house, and immediately wrote to her the following lines.

TO MISS BEVERLEY.

I entreat you to see me! if only for an instant, I entreat, I implore you to see me! Mrs. Charlton may be present,——all the world, if you wish it, may be present,——but deny me not admission, I supplicate, I conjure you!

I will call in an hour; in that time you may have finished your present engagement. I will otherwise wait longer, and call again. You will not, I think, turn me from your door, and, till I have seen you, I can only live in its vicinity.

M. D.

The man who brought this note, waited not for any answer.

Cecilia read it in an agony of mind inexpressible; she saw, by its style, how much Delville was irritated, and her knowledge of his temper made her certain his irritation proceeded from believing himself ill-used. She ardently wished to appease and to quiet him, and regretted the necessity of appearing obdurate and unfeeling, even more, at that moment, than the separation itself. To a mind priding in its purity, and animated in its affections, few sensations can excite keener misery, than those by which an apprehension is raised of being thought worthless or ungrateful by the objects of our chosen regard. To be deprived of their society is less bitter, to be robbed of our own tranquillity by any other means, is less afflicting.

Yet to this it was necessary to submit, or incur the only penalty which, to such a mind, would be more severe, self-reproach: she had promised to be governed by Mrs. Delville, she had nothing, therefore, to do but obey her.

Yet *to turn*, as he expressed himself, *from the door*, a man who, but for an incident the most incomprehensible, would now have been sole master of herself and her actions, seemed so unkind and so tyrannical, that

that she could not endure to be within hearing of his repulse: she begged, therefore, the use of Mrs. Charlton's carriage, and determined to make a visit to Mrs. Harrel till Delvile and his mother had wholly quitted Bury. She was not, indeed, quite satisfied in going to the house of Mr. Arnott, but she had no time to weigh objections, and knew not any other place to which still greater might not be started.

She wrote a short letter to Mrs. Delvile, acquainting her with her purpose, and its reason, and repeating her assurances that she would be guided by her implicitly; and then, embracing Mrs. Charlton, whom she left to the care of her grand-daughters, she got into a chaise, accompanied only by her maid, and one man and horse, and ordered the postilion to drive to Mr. Arnott's.

C H A P. V.

A COTTAGE.

THE evening was already far advanced, and before she arrived at the end of her little journey it was quite dark. When they came within a mile of Mr. Arnott's house, the postilion, in turning too suddenly from the turnpike to the cross-road, overset the carriage. The accident, however, occasioned no other mischief than delaying their proceeding; and Cecilia and her maid were helped out of the chaise unhurt. The servants, assisted by a man who was walking upon the road, began lifting it up; and Cecilia, too busy within to be attentive to what passed without, disregarded what went forward, till she heard her footman call for help. She then hastily advanced to enquire what was the matter, and found that the passenger who had lent his aid, had, by working in the dark, unfortunately slipped his foot under one of the wheels, and so much hurt it, that without great pain he could not put it to the ground.

Cecilia immediately desired that the sufferer

ferer might be carried to his own home in the chaise, while she and the maid walked on to Mr. Arnott's, attended by her servant on horseback.

This little incident proved of singular service to her upon first entering the house; Mrs. Harrel was at supper with her brother, and hearing the voice of Cecilia in the hall, hastened with the extremest surprise to enquire what had occasioned so late a visit; followed by Mr. Arnott, whose amazement was accompanied with a thousand other sensations too powerful for speech. Cecilia, unprepared with any excuse, instantly related the adventure she had met with on the road, which quieted their curiosity, by turning their attention to her personal safety. They ordered a room to be prepared for her, entreated her to go to rest with all speed, and postpone any further account till the next day. With this request she most gladly complied, happy to be spared the embarrassment of enquiry, and rejoiced to be relieved from the fatigue of conversation.

Her night was restless and miserable: to know how Delvile would bear her flight was never a moment from her thoughts, and to hear whether he would obey or oppose his mother was her incessant wish. She was fixt, however, to be faithful in refusing

to see him, and at least to suffer nothing new from her own enterprize or fault.

Early in the morning Mrs. Harrel came to see her. She was eager to learn why, after invitations repeatedly refused, she was thus suddenly arrived without any; and she was still more eager to talk of herself, and relate the weary life she led thus shut up in the country, and confined to the society of her brother.

Cecilia evaded giving any immediate answer to her questions, and Mrs. Harrel, happy in an opportunity to rehearse her own complaints, soon forgot that she had asked any, and, in a very short time, was perfectly, though imperceptibly, contented to be herself the only subject upon which they conversed.

But not such was the selfishness of Mr. Arnott; and Cecilia, when she went down to breakfast, perceived with the utmost concern that he had passed a night as sleepless as her own. A visit so sudden, so unexpected, and so unaccountable, from an object that no discouragement could make him think of with indifference, had been a subject to him of conjecture and wonder that had revived all the hopes and the fears which had lately, though still unextinguished, lain dormant. The enquiries, however, which his sister had given up, he ventured

ventured not to renew, and thought himself but too happy in her presence, whatever might be the cause of her visit.

He perceived, however, immediately, the sadness that hung upon her mind, and his own was redoubled by the sight : Mrs. Harrel, also, saw that she looked ill, but attributed it to the fatigue and fright of the preceding evening, well knowing that a similar accident would have made her ill herself, or fancy that she was so.

During breakfast, Cecilia sent for the postilion, to enquire of him how the man had fared, whose good-natured assistance in their distress had been so unfortunate to himself. He answered that he had turned out to be a day labourer, who lived about half a mile off. And then, partly to gratify her own humanity, and partly to find any other employment for herself and friends than uninteresting conversation, she proposed that they should all walk to the poor man's habitation, and offer him some amends for the injury he had received. This was readily assented to, and the postilion directed them whither to go.

The place was a cottage, situated upon a common ; they entered it without ceremony, and found a clean looking woman at work.

Cecilia enquired for her husband, and
was

was told that he was gone out to day-labour.

"I am very glad to hear it," returned she; "I hope then he has got the better of the accident he met with last night?"

"It was not him, madam," said the woman, "met with the accident, it was John; — there he is, working in the garden."

To the garden then they all went, and saw him upon the ground, weeding.

The moment they approached he arose, and, without speaking, began to limp, for he could hardly walk; away.

"I am sorry, master," said Cecilia, "that you are so much hurt. Have you had any thing put to your foot?"

The man made no answer, but still turned away from her; a glance, however, of his eye, which the next instant he fixed upon the ground, startled her; she moved round to look at him again, — and perceived Mr. Belfield!

"Good God!" she exclaimed; but seeing him still retreat, she recollected in a moment how little he would be obliged to her for betraying him, and, suffering him to go on, turned back to her party, and led the way again into the house.

As soon as the first emotion of her surprise was over, she enquired how long John had

had belonged to this cottage, and what was his way of life,

The woman answered he had only been with them a week, and that he went out to day-labour with her husband.

Cecilia then, finding their stay kept him from his employment, and willing to save him the distress of being seen by Mr. Arnett or Mrs. Harrel, proposed their returning home. She grieved most sincerely at beholding in so melancholy an occupation a young man of such talents and abilities; she wished much to assist him, and began considering by what means it might be done, when, as they were walking from the cottage, a voice at some distance called out "Madam! Miss Beverley!" and, looking round, to her utter amazement she saw Belfield endeavouring to follow her.

She instantly stopped, and he advanced, his hat in his hand, and his whole air indicating he sought not to be disguised.

Surprised at this sudden change of behaviour, she then stepped forward to meet him, accompanied by her friends: but when they came up to each other, she checked her desire of speaking, to leave him fully at liberty to make himself known, or keep concealed.

He bowed with a look of assumed gaiety and ease, but the deep scarlet that tinged his

his whole face manifested his internal confusion; and in a voice that attempted to sound lively, though its tremulous accents betrayed uneasiness and distress, he exclaimed, with a forced smile, "Is it possible Miss Beverley can deign to notice a poor miserable day-labourer such as I am? how will she be justified in the beau monde, when even the sight of such a wretch ought to fill her with horror? Henceforth let hysticks be blown to the winds, and let nerves be discarded from the female vocabulary, since a lady so young and fair can stand this shock without hartshorn or fainting!"

"I am happy," answered Cecilia, "to find your spirits so good; yet my own, I must confess, are not raised by seeing you in this strange situation."

"My spirits!" cried he, with an air of defiance, "never were they better, never so good as at this moment. Strange as seems my situation, it is all that I wish; I have found out, at last, the true secret of happiness! that secret which so long I pursued in vain, but which always eluded my grasp, till the instant of despair arrived, when, slackening my pace, I gave it up as a phantom. Go from me, I cried, I will be cheated no more! thou airy bubble! thou fleeting shadow! I will live no longer in.

in thy sight, since thy beams dazzle without warming me! Mankind seems only composed as matter for thy experiments, and I will quit the whole race, that thy delusions may be presented to me no more!"

This romantic flight, which startled even Cecilia, though acquainted with his character, gave to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott the utmost surprize; his appearance, and the account they had just heard of him, having by no means prepared them for such sentiments or such language.

"Is then this great secret of happiness, said Cecilia, "nothing, at last, but total seclusion from the world?"

"No, madam," answered he, "it is Labour with Independence."

Cecilia now wished much to ask some explanation of his affairs, but was doubtful whether he would gratify her before Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and hurt to keep him standing, though he leant upon a stick; she told him, therefore, she would at present detain him no longer, but endeavour again to see him before she quitted her friends.

Mr. Arnott then interfered, and desired his sister would entreat Miss Beverley to invite whom she pleased to his house.

Cecilia thanked him, and instantly asked Belfield to call upon her in the afternoon.

"No,

"No, madam, no," cried he, "I have done with visits and society! I will not so soon break through a system with much difficulty formed, when all my future tranquillity depends upon adhering to it. The worthlessness of mankind has disgusted me with the world, and my resolution in quitting it shall be immoveable as its baseness."

"I must not venture then," said Cecilia, "to enquire —"

"Enquire, madam," interrupted he with quickness, "what you please: there is nothing I will not answer to you, — to this lady, to this gentleman, to any and to every body. What can I wish to conceal, where I have nothing to gain or to lose? When first, indeed, I saw you, I involuntarily shrunk; a weak shame for a moment seized me; I felt fallen and debased, and I wished to avoid you: but a little recollection brought me back to my senses. And where, cried I, is the disgrace of exercising for my subsistence the strength with which I am endued? and why should I blush to lead the life which uncorrupted Nature first prescribed to man?"

"Well, then," said Cecilia, more and more interested to hear him, "if you will not visit us, will you at least permit us to return with you to some place where you can be seated?"

"I

"I will with pleasure," cried he, "go to any place where you may be seated yourselves; but for me, I have ceased to regard accommodation or inconvenience."

They then all went back to the cottage, which was now empty, the woman being out at work.

"Will you then, Sir," said Cecilia, "give me leave to enquire whether Lord Vannelt is acquainted with your retirement, and if it will not much surprize and disappoint him?"

"Lord Vannelt," cried he, haughtily, "has no right to be surprized. I would have quitted *his* house, if no other, not even this cottage, had a roof to afford me shelter!"

"I am sorry, indeed, to hear it," said Cecilia; "I had hoped he would have known your value, and merited your regard."

"Ill-usage," answered he, "is as hard to relate as to be endured. There is commonly something pitiful in a complaint; and though oppression in a general sense provokes the wrath of mankind, the investigation of its minuter circumstances excites nothing but derision. Those who give the offence, by the worthy few may be hated, but those who receive it, by the world at large will be despised. Conscious
of

of this, I disdained making any appeal; myself the only sufferer, I had a right to be the only judge, and, shaking off the base trammels of interest and subjection, I quitted the house in silent indignation, not chusing to remonstrate, where I desired not to be reconciled."

"And was there no mode of life," said Cecilia, "to adopt, but living with Lord Vannelt, or giving up the whole world?"

"I weighed every thing maturely," answered he, "before I made my determination, and I found it so much the most eligible, that I am certain I can never repent it. I had friends who would with pleasure have presented me to some other nobleman; but my whole heart revolted against leading that kind of life, and I would not, therefore, idly rove from one great man to another, adding ill-will to disgrace, and pursuing hope in defiance of common sense; no; when I quitted Lord Vannelt, I resolved to give up patronage for ever."

"I retired to private lodgings to deliberate what next could be done. I had lived in many ways, I had been unfortunate or imprudent in all. The law I had tried, but its rudiments were tedious and disgusting; the army, too; but there found my mind more fatigued with indolence; than my body with action; general dissipation had

had then its turn, but the expence to which it led was ruinous, and self-reproach baffled pleasure while I pursued it; I have even—yes, there are few things I have left untried,—I have even,—for why now disguise it? —”

He stopt and coloured, but in a quicker voice presently proceeded.

“Trade, also, has had its share in my experiments; for that, in truth, I was originally destined,—but my education had ill suited me to such a destination, and the trader’s first maxim I reversed, in lavishing when I ought to have accumulated.

“What, then, remained for me? to run over again the same irksome round I had not patience, and to attempt any thing new I was unqualified: money I had none; my friends I could bear to burthen no longer; a fortnight I lingered in wretched irresolution,—a simple accident at the end of it happily settled me; I was walking, one morning, in Hyde Park, forming a thousand plans for my future life, but quarrelling with them all; when a gentleman met me on horseback, from whom, at my Lord Vannelt’s, I had received particular civilities; I looked another way not to be seen by him, and the change in my dress since I left his Lordship’s made me easily pass unnoticed. He had rode on, however,
but

but a few yards, before, by some accident or mismanagement, he had a fall from his horse. Forgetting all my caution, I flew instantly to his assistance; he was bruised, but not otherwise hurt; I helpt him up, and he leant upon my arm; in my haste of enquiring how he had fared, I called him by his name. He knew me, but looked surprised at my appearance; he was speaking to me, however, with kindness, when seeing some gentlemen of his acquaintance galloping up to him, he hastily disengaged himself from me, and instantly beginning to recount to them what had happened, he sedulously looked another way, and joining his new companions, walked off without taking further notice of me. For a moment I was almost tempted to trouble him to come back; but a little recollection told me how ill he deserved my resentment, and bid me transfer it for the future from the pitiful individual to the worthless community.

“ Here finished my deliberation; the disgust to the world which I had already conceived, this little incident confirmed; I saw it was only made for the great and the rich;—poor, therefore, and low, what had I to do in it? I determined to quit it for ever, and to end every disappointment, by crushing every hope.

“ I wrote to Lord Vanelet to send my trunks to my mother; I wrote to my mother that I was well, and would soon let her hear more: I then paid off my lodgings, and “ shaking the dust from my feet,” bid a long adieu to London; and, committing my route to chance, strolè on into the country, without knowing or caring which way.

“ My first thought was simply to seek retirement, and to depend for my future repose upon nothing but a total seclusion from society: but my slow method of travelling gave me time for reflection, and reflection soon shewed me the error of this notion.

“ Guilt, cried I, may, indeed, be avoided by solitude; but will misery? will regret? will deep dejection of mind? no; they will follow more assiduously than ever; for what is there to oppose them, where neither business occupies the time, nor hope the imagination? where the past has left nothing but resentment, and the future opens only to a dismal, uninteresting void? No stranger to life, I knew human nature could not exist on such terms; still less a stranger to books, I respected the voice of wisdom and experience in the first of moralists, and most enlightened of men,* and

* Dr. JOHNSON.

reading

reading the letter of Cowley, I saw the vanity and absurdity of *panting after solitude*.*

“ I sought not, therefore, a cell; but, since I purposed to live for myself, I determined for myself also to think. Servility of imitation has ever been as much my scorn as servility of dependence; I resolved, therefore, to strike out something new, and no more to retire as every other man had retired, than to linger in the world as every other man had lingered.

“ The result of all you now see. I found out this cottage, and took up my abode in it. I am here out of the way of all society, yet avoid the great evil of retreat, *having nothing to do*. I am constantly, not capriciously employed, and the exercise which benefits my health, imperceptibly raises my spirits in despite of adversity. I am removed from all temptation, I have scarce even the power to do wrong; I have no object for ambition, for repining I have no time: — I have found out, I repeat, the true secret of happiness, Labour with Independence.”

He stopt; and Cecilia, who had listened to this narrative with a mixture of compassion, admiration and censure, was too

* Life of Cowley, p. 34.

much struck with its singularity to be readily able to answer it. Her curiosity to hear him had sprung wholly from her desire to assist him, and she had expected from his story to gather some hint upon which her services might be offered. But none had occurred; he professed himself fully satisfied with his situation; and though reason and probability contradicted the profession, she could not venture to dispute it with any delicacy or prudence.

She thanked him, therefore, for his relation, with many apologies for the trouble she had given him, and added, "I must not express my concern for misfortunes which you seem to regard as conducive to your contentment, nor remonstrate at the step you have taken, since you have been led to it by choice, not necessity: but yet, you must pardon me if I cannot help hoping I shall some time see you happier, according to the common, however vulgar ideas of the rest of the world."

"No, never; never! I am sick of mankind, not from theory, but experience; and the precautions I have taken against mental fatigue, will secure me from repentance, or any desire of change; for it is not the active, but the indolent who weary; it is not the temperate, but the pampered who are capricious."

"Is your sister, Sir, acquainted with this change in your fortune and opinions?"

"Poor girl, no! She and her unhappy mother have borne but too long with my enterprizes and misfortunes. Even yet they would sacrifice whatever they possess to enable me to play once more the game so often lost; but I will not abuse their affection, nor suffer them again to be slaves to my caprices, nor dupes to their own delusive expectations. I have sent them word I am happy; I have not yet told them how or where. I fear much the affliction of their disappointment, and, for a while, shall conceal from them my situation, which they would fancy was disgraceful, and grieve at as cruel."

"And is it *not* cruel?" said Cecilia, "is labour indeed so sweet? and can you seriously derive happiness from what all others consider as misery?"

"Not sweet," answered he, "in itself; but sweet, most sweet and salutary in its effects. When I work, I forget all the world; my projects for the future, my disappointments from the past. Mental fatigue is overpowered by personal; I toil till I require rest, and that rest which nature, not luxury demands, leads not to idle meditation, but to sound, heavy, necessary sleep. I awake the next morning to the same

same thought-exiling business, work again till my powers are exhausted, and am relieved again at night by the same health-recruiting insensibility."

"And if this," cried Cecilia, "is the life of happiness, why have we so many complaints of the sufferings of the poor, and why so eternally do we hear of their hardships and distress?"

"They have known no other life. They are strangers, therefore, to the felicity of their lot. Had they mingled in the world, fed high their fancy with hope, and looked forward with expectation of enjoyment; had they been courted by the great, and offered with profusion adulation for their abilities, yet, even when starving, been offered nothing else! — had they seen an attentive circle wait all its entertainment from their powers, yet found themselves forgotten as soon as out of sight, and perceived themselves avoided when no longer buffoons! — Oh had they known and felt provocations such as these, how gladly would their resentful spirits turn from the whole unfeeling race, and how would they respect that noble and manly labour, which at once disentangles them from such subjugating snares, and enables them to fly the ingratitude they abhor! Without the contrast of vice, virtue unloved may be

lovely ; without the experience of misery, happiness is simply a dull privation of evil."

"And are you so content," cried Cecilia, "with your present situation, as even to think it offers you reparation for your past sufferings?"

"Content!" repeated he with energy, "O more than content, I am proud of my present situation! I glory in shewing to the world, I glory still more in shewing to myself, that those whom I cannot but despise I will not scruple to defy, and that where I have been treated unworthily, I will scorn to be obliged."

"But will you pardon me," said Cecilia, "should I ask again, why in quitting Lord Vannelt, you concluded no one else worthy a trial?"

"Because it was less my Lord Vannelt, madam, than my own situation, that disgusted me; for though I liked not his behaviour, I found him a man too generally esteemed to flatter myself better usage would await me in merely changing my abode; while my station was the same. I believe, indeed, he never meant to offend me; but I was offended the more that he should think me an object to receive indignity without knowing it. To have had this pointed out to him, would have been

at

at once mortifying and vain ; for delicacy, like taste, can only partially be taught, and will always be superficial and erring where it is not innate. Those wrongs, which though too trifling to resent, are too humiliating to be borne, speech can convey no idea of ; the soul must feel, or the understanding can never comprehend them."

" But surely," said Cecilia, " though people of refinement are rare, they yet exist ; why, then, remove yourself from the possibility of meeting with them ?"

" Must I run about the nation," cried he, " proclaiming my distress, and describing my temper ? telling the world that though dependent I demand respect as well as assistance ; and publishing to mankind, that though poor I will accept no gifts if offered with contumely ? Who will listen to such an account ? who will care for my misfortunes, but as they may humble me to his service ? who will hear my mortifications, but to say I deserve them ? what has the world to do with my feelings and peculiarities ? I know it too well to think calamity will soften it ; I need no new lessons to instruct me that to conquer affliction is more wise than to relate it."

" Unfortunate as you have been," said Cecilia, " I cannot wonder at your asperity ; but yet, it is surely no more than

justice to acknowledge, that hard-heartedness to distress is by no means the fault of the present times : on the contrary, it is scarce sooner made known, then every one is ready to contribute to its relief."

" And how contribute ? " cried he, " by a paltry donation of money ? Yes, the man whose only want is a few guineas, may, indeed, obtain them ; but he who asks kindness and protection, whose oppressed spirit calls for consolation even more than his ruined fortune for repair, how is his struggling soul, if superior to his fate, to brook the ostentation of patronage, and the insolence of condescension ? Yes, yes, the world will save the poor beggar who is starving ; but the fallen wretch, who will not cringe for his support, may consume in his own wretchedness without pity and without help ! "

Cecilia now saw that the wound his sensibility had received was too painful for argument, and too recent immediately to be healed. She forbore, therefore, to detain him any longer, but expressing her best wishes, without venturing to hint at her services, she arose, and they all took their leave ; — Belfield hastening, as they went, to return to the garden, where, looking over the hedge as they passed, they saw him employed again in weeding, with the eagerness

eagerness of a man who pursues his favourite occupation.

Cecilia half forgot her own anxieties and sadness, in the concern which she felt for this unfortunate and extraordinary young man. She wished much to devise some means for drawing him from a life of such hardship and obscurity; but what to a man thus "jealous in honour," thus scrupulous in delicacy, could she propose, without more risk of offence, than probability of obliging? His account had, indeed, convinced her how much he stood in need of assistance, but it had shewn her no less how fastidious he would be in receiving it.

Nor was she wholly without fear that an earnest solicitude to serve him, his youth, talents, and striking manners considered, might occasion even in himself a misconstruction of her motives, such as she already had given birth to in his forward and partial mother.

The present, therefore, all circumstances weighed, seemed no season for her liberality, which she yet resolved to exert the first moment it was un-opposed by propriety.

C H A P. VI.

A C O N T E S T.

THE rest of the day was passed in discussing this adventure; but in the evening, Cecilia's interest in it was all sunk, by the reception of the following letter from Mrs. Delville.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

I grieve to interrupt the tranquillity of a retirement so judiciously chosen, and I lament the necessity of again calling to trial the virtue of which the exertion, though so captivating, is so painful; but alas, my excellent young friend, we came not hither to enjoy, but to suffer; and happy only are those whose sufferings have neither by folly been sought, nor by guilt been merited, but arising merely from the imperfection of humanity, have been resisted with fortitude, or endured with patience.

I am informed of your virtuous steadiness, which corresponds with my expectations, while it excites my respect. All further conflict I had hoped to have saved you;

you; and to the triumph of your goodness I had trusted for the recovery of your peace: but Mortimer has disappointed me, and our work is still unfinished.

He avers that he is solemnly engaged to you, and in pleading to me his honour, he silences both expostulation and authority. From your own words alone will he acknowledge his dismissal; and notwithstanding my reluctance to impose upon you this task, I cannot silence or quiet him without making the request.

For a purpose such as this, can you, then, admit us? Can you bear with your own lips to confirm the irrevocable decision? You will feel, I am sure, for the unfortunate Mortimer, and it was earnestly my desire to spare you the sight of his affliction; yet such is my confidence in your prudence, that since I find him bent upon seeing you, I am not without hope, that from witnessing the greatness of your mind, the interview may rather calm than inflame him.

This proposal you will take into consideration, and if you are able, upon such terms, to again meet my son, we will wait upon you together, where and when you will appoint; but if the gentleness of your nature will make the effort too severe for you, scruple not to decline it; for Mortimer,

L 5

mer, when he knows your pleasure, will submit to it as he ought.

Adieu, most amiable and but too lovely Cecilia; whatever you determine, be sure of my concurrence, for nobly have you earned, and ever must you retain, the esteem, the affection, and the gratitude of

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "when shall I be at rest? when cease to be persecuted by new conflicts! Oh why must I so often, so cruelly, though so reluctantly, reject and reprove the man who of all men I wish to accept and to please!"

But yet, though repining at this hard necessity, she hesitated not a moment in complying with Mrs. Delvile's request, and immediately sent an answer that she would meet her the next morning at Mrs. Charlton's.

She then returned to the parlour, and apologized to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott for the abruptness of her visit, and the suddenness of her departure. Mr. Arnott heard her in silent dejection; and Mrs. Harrel used all the persuasion in her power to prevail with her to stay, her presence being some relief to her solitude; but finding it ineffectual, she earnestly pressed her to
hasten

hasten her entrance into her own house, that their absence might be shortened, and their meeting more sprightly.

Cecilia passed the night in planning her behaviour for the next day ; she found how much was expected from her by Mrs. Delvile, who had even exhorted her to decline the interview if doubtful of her own strength. Delvile's firmness in insisting the refusal should come directly from herself, surprised, gratified and perplexed her in turn ; she had imagined, that from the moment of the discovery, he would implicitly have submitted to the award of a parent at once so revered and so beloved, and how he had summoned courage to contend with her she could not conjecture : yet that courage and that contention astonished not more than they soothed her, since, from her knowledge of his filial tenderness, she considered them as the most indubitable proofs she had yet received of the fervour and constancy of his regard for her. But would he, when she had ratified the decision of his mother, forbear all further struggle, and for ever yield up all pretensions to her ? this was the point upon which her uncertainty turned, and the ruling subject of her thoughts and meditation.

To be steady, however, herself, be his
L 6 conduct

conduct what it might, was invariably her intention, and was all her ambition: yet earnestly she wished the meeting over, for she dreaded to see the sorrow of Delville, and she dreaded still more the susceptibility of her own heart.

The next morning, to her great concern, Mr. Arnott was waiting in the hall when she came down stairs, and so much grieved at her departure, that he handed her to the chaise without being able to speak to her, and hardly heard her thanks and compliments, but by recollection after she was gone.

She arrived at Mrs. Charlton's very early, and found her old friend in the same state she had left her. She communicated to her the purpose of her return, and begged she would keep her grand daughters up stairs, that the conference in the parlour might be uninterrupted and unheard.

She then made a forced and hasty breakfast, and went down to be ready to receive them. They came not till eleven o'clock, and the time of her waiting was passed in agonies of expectation.

At length they were announced, and at length they entered the room.

Cecilia, with her utmost efforts for courage, could hardly stand to receive them. They came in together, but Mrs. Delville, advancing

advancing before her son, and endeavouring so to stand as to intercept his view of her, with the hope that in a few instants her emotion would be less visible, said, in the most soothing accents, "What honour Miss Beverley does us by permitting this visit! I should have been sorry to have left Suffolk without the satisfaction of again seeing you; and my son, sensible of the high respect he owes you, was most unwilling to be gone, before he had paid you his devoirs."

Cecilia courtied; but depressed by the cruel task, which awaited her, had no power to speak; and Mrs. Delvile, finding she still trembled, made her sit down, and drew a chair next to her.

Mean while Delvile, with an emotion far more violent, because wholly unrestrained, waited impatiently till the ceremonial of the reception was over, and then, approaching Cecilia, in a voice of perturbation and resentment, said, "In this presence, at least, I hope I may be heard; though my letters have been unanswered, my visits refused, though inexorably you have shewn me —"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mrs. Delvile, "forget not that what I have told you is irrevocable; you now meet Miss Beverley for no other purpose than to give and to receive

receive a mutual release of all tie or engagement with each other."

"Pardon me, madam," cried he, "this is a condition to which I have never assented. I come not to release, but to claim her! I am hers, and hers wholly! I protest it in the face of the world! The time, therefore, is now past for the sacrifice which you demand, since scarce are you more my mother, than I consider her as my wife."

Cecilia, amazed at this dauntless declaration, now almost lost her fear in her surprise; while Mrs. Delvile, with an air calm though displeased, answered, "This is not a point to be at present discussed, and I had hoped you knew better what was due to your auditors. I only consented to this interview as a mark of your respect for Miss Beverley, to whom in propriety it belongs to break off this unfortunate connexion."

Cecilia, who at this call could no longer be silent, now gathered fortitude to say, "Whatever tie or obligation may be supposed to depend upon me, I have already relinquished; and I am now ready to declare —"

"That you wholly give me up?" interrupted Delvile, "is that what you would say? — Oh how have I offended you? how have

have I merited a displeasure that can draw upon me such a sentence? — Answer, speak to me, Cecilia, what is it I have done?"

"Nothing, Sir," said Cecilia, confounded at this language in the presence of his mother, "you have done nothing,—but yet—"

"Yet what? — have you conceived to me an aversion? has any dreadful and horrible antipathy succeeded to your esteem? — tell, tell me without disguise, do you hate, do you abhor me?"

Cecilia sighed, and turned away her head; and Mrs. Delville indignantly exclaimed, "What madness and absurdity! I scarce know you under the influence of such irrational violence. Why will you interrupt Miss Beverley in the only speech you ought to hear from her? Why, at once, oppress her, and irritate me, by words of more passion than reason? Go on, charming girl, finish what so wisely, so judiciously you were beginning; and then you shall be released from this turbulent persecution."

"No, madam, she must not go on!" cried Delville, "if she does not utterly abhor me, I will not *suffer* her to go on;— Pardon, pardon me, Cecilia, but your too exquisite delicacy is betraying not only my happiness, but your own. Once more; therefore, I conjure you to hear me, and then

then if, deliberately and unbiassed, you renounce me, I will never more distress you by resisting your decree."

Cecilia, abashed and changing colour, was silent, and he proceeded.

"All that has past between us, the vows I have offered you of faith, constancy and affection, the consent I obtained from you to be legally mine, the bond of settlement I have had drawn up, and the high honour you conferred upon me in suffering me to lead you to the altar, — all these particulars are already known to so many, that the least reflection must convince you they will soon be concealed from none: tell me, then, if your own fame pleads not for me, and if the scruples which lead you to refuse, by taking another direction, will not, with much more propriety, urge, nay enjoin you to accept me? — You hesitate at least, — O Miss Beverley! I see in that hesitation —"

"Nothing, nothing!" cried she, hastily, and checking her rising irresolution; "there is nothing for you to see, but that every way I now turn I have rendered myself miserable!"

"Mortimer," said Mrs. Delville, seized with terror as she penetrated into the mental yielding of Cecilia, "you have now spoken to Miss Beverley; and unwilling as

I am to obtrude upon her our difference of sentiment, it is necessary, since she has heard you, that I, also, should claim her attention."

"First let her speak!" cried Delvile, who in her apparent wavering built new hopes, "first let her answer what she has already deigned to listen to."

"No, first let her hear!" cried Mrs. Delvile, "for so only can she judge what answer will reflect upon her most honour."

Then, solemnly turning to Cecilia, she continued: "You see here, Miss Beverley, a young man who passionately adores you, and who forgets in his adoration friends, family, and connections; the opinions in which he has been educated, the honour of his house, his own former views, and all his primitive sense of duty, both public and private!—A passion built on such a defalcation of principle renders him unworthy your acceptance; and not more ignoble for him would be a union which would blot his name from the injured stock whence he sprung, than indelicate for you, who upon such terms ought to despise him."

"Heavens, madam," exclaimed Delvile, "what a speech!"

"O never," cried Cecilia, rising, "may I hear such another! Indeed, madam, there is no occasion to probe me so deeply, for I would

would not now enter your family, for all that the whole world could offer me ! ”

“ At length, then, madam,” cried Delville, turning reproachfully to his mother, “ are you satisfied ? is your purpose now answered ? and is the dagger you have transfixed in my heart sunk deep enough to appease you ? ”

“ O could I draw it out,” cried Mrs. Delville, “ and leave upon it no stain of ignominy, with what joy should my own bosom receive it, to heal the wound I have most compulsatorily inflicted ! — Were this excellent young creature portionless, I would not hesitate in giving my consent ; every claim of interest would be overbalanced by her virtues, and I would not grieve to see you poor, where so conscious you were happy ; but here to concede, would annihilate every hope with which hitherto I have looked up to my son.”

“ Let us now, then, madam,” said Cecilia, “ break up this conference. I have spoken, I have heard, the decree is past, and therefore,—”

“ You are indeed an angel ! ” cried Mrs. Delville, rising and embracing her ; “ and never can I reproach my son with what has past, when I consider for what an object the sacrifice was planned. *You* cannot be unhappy, you have purchased peace by the exercise

ercise of virtue, and the close of every day will bring to you a reward, in the sweets of a self-approving mind.—But we will part, since you think it right; I do wrong to occasion any delay.”

“No, we will *not* part!” cried Delvile, with encreasing vehemence; “if you force me, madam, from her, you will drive me to distraction! What is there in this world that can offer me a recompense? And what can pride even to the proudest afford as an equivalent? Her perfections you acknowledge, her greatness of mind is like your own; she has generously given me her heart,—Oh sacred and fascinating charge! Shall I, after such a deposit, consent to an eternal separation? Repeal, repeal your sentence, my Cecilia! let us live to ourselves and our consciences, and leave the vain prejudices of the world to those who can be paid by them for the loss of all besides!”

“Is this conflict, then,” said Mrs. Delvile, “to last for-ever? Oh end it, Mortimer, finish it, and make me happy! she is just, and will forgive you, she is noble-minded, and will honour you. Fly, then, at this critical moment, for in flight alone is your safety; and then will your father see the son of his hopes, and then shall the fond blessings of your idolizing mother soothe

soothe all your affliction, and soften all your regret!"

"Oh madam!" cried Delvile, "for mercy, for humanity, forbear this cruel supplication!"

"Nay, more than supplication, you have my commands; commands you have never yet disputed, and misery, ten-fold misery, will follow their disobedience. Hear me, Mortimer, for I speak prophetically; I know your heart, I know it to be formed for rectitude and duty, or destined by their neglect to repentance and horror."

Delvile, struck by these words, turned suddenly from them both, and in gloomy despondence walked to the other end of the room. Mrs. Delvile perceived the moment of her power, and determined to pursue the blow: taking, therefore, the hand of Cecilia, while her eyes sparkled with the animation of reviving hope, "See," she cried, pointing to her son, "see if I am deceived! can he bear even the suggestion of future contrition? Think you when it falls upon him, he will support it better? No; he will sink under it. And you, pure as you are of mind, and steadfast in principle, what would your chance be of happiness with a man who never erring till he knew you, could never look at you without regret, be his fondness what it might?"

"Oh

"Oh, madam," cried the greatly shocked Cecilia, "let him, then, see me no more!—take, take him all to yourself! forgive, console him! I will not have the misery of involving him in repentance, nor of incurring the reproaches of the mother he so much reverences!"

"Exalted creature!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "tenderness such as this would confer honour upon a monarch." Then, calling out exultingly to her son, "See," she added, "how great a woman can act, when stimulated by generosity, and a just sense of duty! Follow then, at least, the example you ought to have led, and deserve my esteem and love, or be content to forego them."

"And can I only deserve them," said Delvile, in a tone of the deepest anguish, "by a compliance to which not merely my happiness, but my reason must be sacrificed? What honour do I injure that is not factitious? What evil threatens our union, that is not imaginary? In the general commerce of the world it may be right to yield to its prejudices, but in matters of serious importance, it is weakness to be shackled by scruples so frivolous; and it is cowardly to be governed by the customs we condemn. Religion and the laws of our country should then alone be consulted, and where those are neither opposed nor infringed, we should hold

hold ourselves superior to all other considerations."

"Mistaken notions!" said Mrs. Delville; "and how long do you flatter yourself this independant happiness would endure? How long could you live contented by mere self-gratification, in defiance of the censure of mankind, the renunciation of your family, and the curses of your father?"

"The curses of my father!" repeated he, starting and shuddering, "O no, he could never be so barbarous!"

"He could," said she, steadily, "nor do I doubt but he would. If now, however, you are affected by the prospect of his disclaiming you, think but what you will feel when first forbid to appear before either of us! and think of your remorse for involving Miss Beverley in such disgrace!"

"O speak not such words!" cried he, with agonizing earnestness, "to disgrace her,—to be banished by you,—present not, I conjure you, such scenes to my imagination!"

"Yet would they be unavoidable," continued she; "nor have I said to you all; blinded as you now are by passion, your nobler feelings are only obscured, not extirpated; think, then, how they will all rise in revenge of your insulted dignity, when your name becomes a stranger to your ears,

and you are first saluted by one so meanly adopted!—”

“ Hold, hold, madam,” interrupted he, “ this is more than I can bear !”

“ Heavens !” still continued she, disregarding his entreaty, “ what in the universe can pay you for that first moment of indignity ! Think of it well ere you proceed, and anticipate your sensations, lest the shock should wholly overcome you. How will the blood of your wronged ancestors rise into you guilty cheeks, and how will your heart throb with secret shame and reproach, when wished joy upon your marriage by the name of *Mr. Beverley* !”

Delvile, stung to the soul, attempted not any answer, but walked about the room in the utmost disorder of mind. Cecilia would have retired, but feared irritating him to some extravagance ; and Mrs. Delvile, looking after him, added “ For myself, I would still see, for I should pity your wife,——but NEVER would I behold my son when sunk into an object of compassion !”

“ It shall not be !” cried he, in a transport of rage ; “ cease, cease to distract me ! —be content, madam, —— you have conquered !”

“ Then you are my son !” cried she, rapturously embracing him ; “ now I know again

again my Mortimer! now I see the fair promise of his upright youth, and the flattering completion of my maternal expectations!"

Cecilia, finding all thus concluded, desired nothing so much as to congratulate them on their reconciliation; but having only said "Let *me*, too,—" her voice failed her, she stopt short, and hoping she had been unheard, would have glided out of the room.

But Delville, penetrated and tortured, yet delighted at this sensibility, broke from his mother, and seizing her hand, exclaimed, "Oh Miss Beverley, if *you* are not happy——"

"I am! I am!" cried she, with quickness; "let me pass;—and think no more of me."

"That voice, — those looks, —" cried he, still holding her, "they speak not serenity! — Oh if I have injured your peace, — if that heart, which, pure as angels, deserves to be as sacred from sorrow, through my means, or for my sake, suffers any diminution of tranquillity —"

"None, none!" interrupted she, with precipitation.

"I know well," cried he, "your greatness of soul; and if this dreadful sacrifice gives lasting torture only to myself, — if of
your

your returning happiness I could be assured,
—I would struggle to bear it."

"*You may* be assured of it," cried she, with reviving dignity, "I have no right to expect escaping all calamity, but while I share the common lot, I will submit to it without repining."

"Heaven then bless, and hovering angels watch you?" cried he, and letting go her hand, he ran hastily out of the room.

"Oh Virtue, how bright is thy triumph!" exclaimed Mrs. Delvile, flying up to Cecilia, and folding her in her arms; "Noble, incomparable young creature! I knew not that so much worth was compatible with human frailty!"

But the heroism of Cecilia, in losing its object, lost its force; she sighed, she could not speak, tears gushed into her eyes, and kissing Mrs. Delvile's hand with a look that shewed her inability to converse with her, she hastened, though scarce able to support herself, away, with intention to shut herself up in her own apartment: and Mrs. Delvile, who perceived that her utmost fortitude was exhausted, opposed not her going, and wisely forebore to encrease her emotion, by following her even with her blessings.

But when she came into the hall, she started, and could proceed no further; for there she beheld Delvile, who in too great

agony to be seen, had stopt to recover some composure before he quitted the house.

At the first sound of an opening door, he was hastily escaping; but perceiving Cecilia, and discerning her situation, he more hastily turned back, saying, "Is it possible?—To *me* were you coming?"

She shook her head, and made a motion with her hand to say no, and would then have gone on.

"You are weeping!" cried he, "you are pale!—Oh Miss Beverley! is this your happiness!"

"I am very well,—" cried she, not knowing what she answered, "I am quite well,—pray go,—I am very——" her words died away inarticulated.

"Oh what a voice is that!" exclaimed he, "it pierces my very soul!"

Mrs. Delville now came to the parlour door, and looked aghast at the situation in which she saw them: Cecilia again moved on, and reached the stairs, but tottered, and was obliged to cling to the banisters.

"O suffer me to support you," cried he; "you are not able to stand,—whither is it you would go?"

"Any where,—I don't know,—" answered she, in faltering accents, "but if you would leave me, I should be well."

And, turning from him, she walked again towards the parlour, finding by her shaking

ing frame, the impossibility of getting unaided up the stairs.

"Give me your hand, my love," said Mrs. Delvile; cruelly alarmed by this return, and the moment they re-entered the parlour, she said impatiently to her son, "Mortimer, why are you not gone?"

He heard her not, however; his whole attention was upon Cecilia, who, sinking into a chair, hid her face against Mrs. Delvile: but, reviving in a few moments, and blushing at the weakness she had betrayed, she raised her head, and, with an assumed serenity, said, "I am better,—much better,—I was rather sick,—but it is over; and now, if you will excuse me, I will go to my own room."

She then arose, but her knees trembled, and her head was giddy, and again seating herself, she forced a faint smile, and said, "Perhaps I had better keep quiet."

"Can I bear this!" cried Delvile, "no, it shakes all my resolution! ——— loveliest and most beloved Cecilia! forgive my rash declaration, which I here retract and forswear, and which no false pride, no worthless vanity shall again surprise from me! ——— raise, then, your eyes——"

"Hot-headed young man!" interrupted Mrs. Delvile, with an air of haughty displeasure, "if you cannot be rational, at

least be silent. Miss Beverley, we will both leave him."

Shame, and her own earnestness, now restored some strength to Cecilia, who read with terror in the looks of Mrs. Delville the passions with which she was agitated, and instantly obeyed her by rising; but her son, who inherited a portion of her own spirit, rushed between them both and the door, and exclaimed "Stay, madam, stay! I cannot let you go: I see your intention, I see your dreadful purpose; you will work upon the feelings of Miss Beverley, you will extort from her a promise to see me no more!"

"Oppose not my passing!" cried Mrs. Delville, whose voice, face and manner, spoke the encreasing disturbance of her soul; "I have but too long talked to you in vain; I must now take some better method for the security of the honour of my family."

This moment appeared to Delville decisive; and casting off in desperation all timidity and restraint, he suddenly sprang forward, and snatching the hand of Cecilia from his mother, he exclaimed, "I cannot, I will not give her up!—nor now, madam, nor ever!—I protest it most solemnly! I affirm it by my best hopes! I swear it by all that I hold sacred!"

Grief and horror next to frenzy at a disappointment thus unexpected, and thus preremp-

peremptory, rose in the face of Mrs. Delvile, who, striking her hand upon her forehead, cried "My brain is on fire!" and rushed out of the room.

Cecilia had now no difficulty to disengage herself from Delvile, who, shocked at the exclamation, and confounded by the sudden departure of his mother, hastened eagerly to pursue her: she had only flown into the next parlour; but, upon following her thither, what was his dread and his alarm, when he saw her extended upon the floor, her face, hands and neck all covered with blood! "Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, prostrating himself by her side, "what is it you have done! — where are you wounded? — what direful curse have you denounced against your son!"

Not able to speak, she angrily shook her head, and indignantly made a motion with her hand, that commanded him from her sight.

Cecilia, who had followed, though half dead with terror, had yet the presence of mind to ring the bell. A servant came immediately; and Delvile, starting up from his mother, ordered him to fetch the first surgeon or physician he could find.

The alarm now brought the rest of the servants into the room, and Mrs. Delvile suffered herself to be raised from the ground,

and seated in a chair; she was still silent, but shewed a disgust to any assistance from her son, that made him deliver her into the hands of the servants, while, in speechless agony, he only looked on and watched her.

Neither did Cecilia, though forgetting her own sorrow, and no longer sensible of personal weakness, venture to approach her: uncertain what had happened, she yet considered herself as the ultimate cause of this dreadful scene, and feared to risk the effect of the smallest additional emotion.

The servant returned with a surgeon in a few minutes: Cecilia, unable to wait and hear what he would say, glided hastily out of the room; and Delvile, in still greater agitation, followed her quick into the next parlour; but having eagerly advanced to speak to her, he turned precipitately about, and hurrying into the hall, walked in hasty steps up and down it, without courage to enquire what was passing.

At length the surgeon came out: Delvile flew to him, and stopt him, but could ask no question. His countenance, however, rendered words unnecessary; the surgeon understood him, and said, "The lady will do very well; she has burst a blood vessel, but I think it will be of no consequence. She must be kept quiet and easy,"

easy, and upon no account suffered to talk, or to use any exertion."

Delvile now let him go, and flew himself into a corner to return thanks to heaven that the evil, however great, was less than he had at first apprehended. He then went into the parlour to Cecilia, eagerly calling out, "Heaven be praised, my mother has not voluntarily cursed me!"

"O now then," cried Cecilia, "once more make her bless you! the violence of her agitation has already almost destroyed her, and her frame is too weak for this struggle of contending passions;—go to her, then, and calm the tumult of her spirits, by acquiescing wholly in her will, and being to her again the son she thinks she has lost!"

"Alas!" said he, in a tone of the deepest dejection; "I have been preparing myself for that purpose, and waited but your commands to finally determine me."

"Let us both go to her instantly," said Cecilia; "the least delay may be fatal."

She now led the way, and approaching Mrs. Delvile, who, faint and weak, was seated upon an arm chair, and resting her head upon the shoulder of a maid servant, said, "Lean, dearest madam, upon me, and speak not, but hear us!"

She then took the place of the maid, and

desired her and the other servants to go out of the room. Delvile advanced, but his mother's eye, recovering, at his sight, its wanted fire, darted upon him a glance of such displeasure, that, shuddering with the apprehension of inflaming again those passions which threatened her destruction, he hastily sunk on one knee, and abruptly exclaimed, "Look at me with less abhorrence, for I come but to resign myself to your will."

"Mine, also," cried Cecilia, "that will shall be; you need not speak it, we know it, and here solemnly we promise that we will separate for ever."

"Revive, then, my mother," said Delvile, "rely upon our plighted honours, and think only of your health, for your son will never more offend you."

Mrs. Delvile, much surprised, and strongly affected, held out her hand to him, with a look of mingled compassion and obligation, and dropping her head upon the bosom of Cecilia, who with her other arm she pressed towards her, she burst into an agony of tears.

"Go, go, Sir!" said Cecilia, cruelly alarmed, "you have said all that is necessary; leave Mrs. Delvile now, and she will be more composed."

Delvile instantly obeyed, and then his mother, whose mouth still continued to fill with

with blood, though it gushed not from her with the violence it had begun, was prevailed upon by the prayers of Cecilia to consent to be conveyed into her room; and, as her immediate removal to another house might be dangerous, she complied also, though very reluctantly, with her urgent entreaties, that she would take entire possession of it till the next day.

This point gained, Cecilia left her, to communicate what had passed to Mrs. Charlton; but was told by one of the servants, that Mr. Delvile begged first to speak with her in the next room.

She hesitated for a moment whether to grant this request; but recollecting it was right to acquaint him with his mother's intention of staying all night, she went to him.

"How indulgent you are," cried he, in a melancholy voice as she opened the door; "I am now going post to Dr. Lyster, whom I shall entreat to come hither instantly; but I am fearful of again disturbing my mother, and must therefore rely upon you to acquaint her what is become of me."

"Most certainly; I have begged her to remain here to night, and I hope I shall prevail with her to continue with me till Dr. Lyster's arrival; after which she will, doubtless, be guided either in staying

longer, or removing elsewhere, by his advice."

"You are all goodness," said he, with a deep sigh; "and how I shall support—but I mean not to return hither, at least not to this house,—unless, indeed, Dr. Lyfter's account should be alarming. I leave my mother, therefore, to your kindness, and only hope, only entreat, that your own health,—your own peace of mind—neither by attendance upon her—by anxiety—by pity for her son—"

He stopt, and seemed gasping for breath; Cecilia turned from him to hide her emotion, and he proceeded with a rapidity of speech that shewed his terror of continuing with her any longer, and his struggle with himself to be gone: "The promise you have made in both our names to my mother, I shall hold myself bound to observe. I see, indeed, that her reason or her life would fall the sacrifice of further opposition: of myself, therefore, it is no longer time to think.—I take of you no leave—I cannot! yet I would fain tell you the high reverence—but it is better to say nothing—"

"Much better," cried Cecilia, with a forced and faint smile; "lose not, therefore, an instant, but hasten to this good Dr. Lyfter."

"I

"I will;" answered he, going to the door; but there, stopping and turning round, "one thing I should yet," he added, "wish to say, — I have been impetuous, violent, unreasonable, — with shame and with regret I recollect how impetuous, and how unreasonable: I have persecuted, where I ought in silence to have submitted; I have reproached, where I ought in candour to have approved; and in the vehemence with which I have pursued you, I have censured that very dignity of conduct which has been the basis of my admiration, my esteem, my devotion! but never can I forget, and never without fresh wonder remember, the sweetness with which you have borne with me, even when most I offended you. For this impatience, this violence, this inconsistency, I now most sincerely beg your pardon; and if, before I go, you could so far condescend as to pronounce my forgiveness, with a lighter heart, I think, I should quit you."

"Do not talk of forgiveness," said Cecilia, "you have never offended me; I always knew — always was sure — always imputed —" she stopt, unable to proceed.

Deeply penetrated by her apparent distress, he with difficulty restrained himself from falling at her feet; but after a moment's pause and recollection, he said, "I

understand the generous indulgence you have shewn me, an indulgence I shall ever revere, and ever grieve to have abused. I ask you not to remember me, — far, far happier do I wish you than such a remembrance could make you ; but I will pain the humanity of your disposition no longer. You will tell my mother — but no matter ! — Heaven preserve you, my angelic Cecilia ! — Miss Beverley, I mean, — Heaven guide, protect, and bless you ! And should I see you no more, should this be the last sad moment ——— ”

He paused, but presently recovering himself, added, “ May I hear, at least, of your tranquillity, for that alone can have any chance to quiet or repress the anguish I feel here ! ”

He then abruptly retreated, and ran out of the house.

Cecilia for a while remained almost stupified with sorrow ; she forgot Mrs. Devile, she forgot Mrs. Charlton, she forgot her own design of apologizing to one, or assisting the other : she continued in the posture in which he had left her, quite without motion, and almost without sensibility.

C H A P. VII.

A MESSAGE.

FROM this lethargy of sadness Cecilia was soon, however, awakened by the return of the surgeon, who had brought with him a physician to consult upon Mrs. Delville's situation. Terror for the mother once more drove the son from her thoughts, and she waited with the most apprehensive impatience to hear the result of the consultation. The physician declined giving any positive opinion, but, having written a prescription, only repeated the injunction of the surgeon, that she should be kept extremely quiet, and on no account be suffered to talk.

Cecilia, though shocked and frightened at the occasion, was yet by no means sorry at an order which thus precluded all conversation; unfitted for it by her own misery, she was glad to be relieved from all necessity of imposing upon herself the irksome task of finding subjects for discourse to which she was wholly indifferent, while
obliged

obliged with sedulity to avoid those by which alone her mind was occupied.

The worthy Mrs. Charlton heard the events of the morning with the utmost concern, but charged her grand-daughters to assist her young friend in doing the honours of her house to Mrs. Delville, while she ordered another apartment to be prepared for Cecilia, to whom she administered all the consolation her friendly zeal could suggest.

Cecilia, however unhappy, had too just a way of thinking to indulge in selfish grief, where occasion called her to action for the benefit of others : scarce a moment, therefore now did she allow to sorrow and herself, but assiduously bestowed the whole of her time upon her two sick friends, dividing her attention according to their own desire or convenience, without consulting or regarding any choice of her own. Choice, indeed, she had none ; she loved Mrs. Charlton, she revered Mrs. Delville ; the warmest wish with which her heart glowed, was the recovery of both, but too deep was her affliction to receive pleasure from either.

Two days passed thus, during which the constancy of her attendance, which at another time would have fatigued her, proved the only relief she was capable of receiving.

Mrs.

Mrs. Delvile was evidently affected by her vigilant tenderness, but seemed equally desirous with herself to make use of the prohibition to speech as an excuse for uninterrupted silence. She enquired not even after her son, though the eagerness of her look towards the door whenever it was opened, shewed either a hope, or an apprehension that he might enter. Cecilia wished to tell her whither he was gone, but dreaded trusting her voice with his name; and their silence, after a while, seemed so much by mutual consent, that she had soon as little courage as she had inclination to break it.

The arrival of Dr. Lytster gave her much satisfaction, for upon him rested her hopes of Mrs. Delvile's re-establishment. He sent for her down stairs, to enquire whether he was expected; and hearing that he was not, desired her to announce him, as the smallest emotion might do mischief.

She returned up stairs, and after a short preparation, said, "Your favourite Dr. Lytster, madam, is come, and I shall be much the happier for having you under his care."

"Dr. Lytster?" cried she, "who sent for him?"

"I believe — I fancy — Mr. Delvile fetched him."

"My

"My son? — is he here, then?"

"No, — he went, the moment he left you, for Dr. Lyster, — and Dr. Lyster is come by himself."

"Does he write to you?"

"No, indeed! — he writes not — he comes not — dearest madam be satisfied, he will do neither to *me* ever more!"

"Exemplary young man!" cried she, in a voice hardly audible, "how great is his loss! — unhappy Mortimer! — ill-fated, and ill-rewarded!"

She sighed, and said no more; but this short conversation, the only one which had passed between them since her illness, agitated her so much, that Dr. Lyster, who now came up stairs, found her in a state of trembling and weakness that both alarmed and surprised him. Cecilia, glad of an opportunity to be gone, left the room, and sent, by Dr. Lyster's desire, for the physician and surgeon, who had already attended.

After they had been some time with their patient, they retired to a consultation, and when it was over, Dr. Lyster waited upon Cecilia in the parlour, and assured her he had no apprehension of danger for Mrs. Delville, "Though, for another week, he added, I would have her continue *your* patient, as she is not yet fit to be removed.

But pray mind that she is kept quiet; let nobody go near her, not even her own son. By the way he is waiting for me at the inn, so I'll just speak again to his mother, and be gone."

Cecilia was well pleased by this accidental information, to learn both the anxiety of Delville for his mother, and the steadiness of his forbearance for himself. When Dr. Lyfter came down stairs again, "I shall stay," he said, "till to-morrow, but I hope she will be able in another week to get to Bristol. In the mean time I shall leave her, I see, with an excellent nurse. But, my good young lady, in your care of her, don't neglect yourself; I am not quite pleased with your looks, though it is but an old fashioned speech to tell you so. — What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing;" said she, a little embarrassed; "but had you not better have some tea?"

"Why yes, I think I had; — but what shall I do with my young man?"

Cecilia understood the hint, but coloured, and made no answer.

"He is waiting for me," he continued, "at the inn; however, I never yet knew the young man I would prefer to a young woman, so if you will give me some tea here, I shall certainly jilt him."

Cecilia

Cecilia instantly rang the bell, and ordered tea.

"Well now," said he, "remember the sin of this breach of appointment lies wholly at your door. I shall tell him you laid violent hands on me; and if that is not enough to excuse me, I shall desire he will try whether he could be more of a stoic with you himself."

"I think I must *un*order the tea," said she, with what gaiety she could assume,

"if I am to be responsible for any mischief from your drinking it."

"No, no, you shan't be off now; but pray would it be quite out of rule for you to send and ask him to come to us?"

"Why I believe — I think —" said she, stammering, "it's very likely he may be engaged."

"Well, well, I don't mean to propose any violent incongruity. You must excuse my blundering; I understand but little of the *etiquette* of young ladies. 'Tis a science too intricate to be learned without more study than we plodding men of business can well spare time for. However, when I have done *writing* prescriptions, I will set about *reading* them, provided you will be my instructress."

Cecilia, though ashamed of a charge in which prudery and affectation were implied, was

was compelled to submit to it, as either to send for Delville, or explain her objections, was equally impossible. The Miss Charltons, therefore, joined them, and they went to tea.

Just as they had done, a note was delivered to Dr. Lytton; "See here," cried he, when he had read it, "what a fine thing it is to be a *young man*! Why now, Mr. Mortimer understands as much of all this *etiquette* as you ladies do yourselves; for he only writes a note even to ask how his mother does."

He then put it into Cecilia's hand.

To Dr. LYTTON.

TELL me, my dear Sir, how you have found my mother? I am uneasy at your long stay, and engaged with my friend Biddulph, or I should have followed you in person.

M. D.

"So you see," continued the doctor, "I need not do penance for engaging myself to *you*, when this young gentleman can find such good entertainment for himself."

Cecilia, who well knew the honourable motive of Delville's engagement, with difficulty

ficulty forbore speaking in his vindication. Dr. Lyfter immediately began an answer, but before he had finished it, called out, "Now as I am told you are a very good young woman, I think you can do no less than assist me, to punish this gay spark, for playing the *macaroni*, when he ought to visit his sick mother."

Cecilia, much hurt for Delville, and much confused for herself, looked abashed, but knew not what to answer.

"My scheme," continued the doctor, "is to tell him, that as he has found one engagement for tea, he may find another for supper; but that as to me, I am better disposed of, for you insist upon keeping me to yourself. Come, what says *etiquette*? may I treat myself with this puff?"

"Certainly," said Cecilia, endeavouring to look pleased, "if you will favour us with your company, Miss Charltons and myself will think the *puffing* should rather be ours than yours."

"That, then," said the doctor, "will not answer my purpose, for I mean the puff to be my own, or how do I punish him? So, suppose I tell him I shall not only sup with three young ladies, but be invited to a tête à tête with one of them into the bargain?"

The young ladies only laughed, and the Dr. finished his note, and sent it away; and then,

then, turning gayly to Cecilia, "Come," he said, "why don't you give me this invitation? surely you don't mean to make me guilty of perjury?"

Cecilia, but little disposed for pleasantry, would gladly now have dropt the subject; but Dr. Lytton, turning to the Miss Charltons, said, "Young ladies, I call you both to witness, if this is not very bad usage: this young woman has connived at my writing a downright falsehood, and all the time took me in to believe it was a truth. The only way I can think of to cure her of such frolics, is for both of you to leave us together, and so make her keep her word whether she will or no."

The Miss Charltons took the hint, and went away; while Cecilia, who had not at all suspected he meant seriously to speak with her, remained extremely perplexed to think what he had to say.

"Mrs. Delvile," cried he, continuing the same air of easy good humour, "though I allowed her not to speak to me above twenty words, took up near ten of them to tell me that you had behaved to her like an angel. Why so she ought, cried I; what else was she sent for here to look so like one? I charged her, therefore, to take all that as a thing of course; and to prove that

I really think what I say, I am now going to make a trial of you, that, if you are any thing less, will induce you to order some of your men to drive me into the street. The truth is, I have had a little commission given me, which in the first place I know not how to introduce, and which, in the second, as far as I can judge, appears to be absolutely superfluous."

Cecilia now felt uneasy and alarmed, and begged him to explain himself. He then dropt the levity with which he had begun the discourse, and after a grave, yet gentle preparation, expressive of his unwillingness to distress her, and his firm persuasion of her uncommon worthiness, he acquainted her that he was no stranger to her situation with respect to the Delville family.

"Good God!" cried she, blushing and much amazed; "and who—?"

"I knew it," said he, "from the moment I attended Mr. Mortimer in his illness at Delville-Castle. He could not conceal from me that the seat of his disorder was his mind; and I could not know that, without readily conjecturing the cause, when I saw who was his father's guest, and when I knew what was his father's character. He found he was betrayed to me, and upon my advising a journey, he understood me properly. His openness to counsel, and the

manly firmness with which he behaved in quitting you, made me hope the danger was blown over. But last week, when I was at the Castle, where I have for some time attended Mr. Delvile, who has had a severe fit of the gout, I found him in an agitation of spirits that made me apprehend it would be thrown into his stomach. I desired Mrs. Delvile to use her influence to calm him; but she was herself in still greater emotion, and acquainting me she was obliged to leave him, desired I would spend with him every moment in my power. I have therefore almost lived at the Castle during her absence, and, in the course of our many conversations, he has acknowledged to me the uneasiness under which he laboured, from the intelligence concerning his son, which he had just received."

Cecilia wished here to enquire *how* received, and from whom, but had not the courage, and therefore he proceeded.

"I was still with the father when Mr. Mortimer arrived post at my house to fetch me hither. I was sent for home; he informed me of his errand without disguise, for he knew I was well acquainted with the original secret whence all the evil arose. I told him my distress in what manner to leave his father; and he was extremely shocked

shocked himself when acquainted with his situation. We agreed that it would be vain to conceal from him the indisposition of Mrs. Delvile, which the delay of her return, and a thousand other accidents, might in some unfortunate way make known to him. He commissioned me, therefore, to break it to him, that he might consent to my journey, and at the same time to quiet his own mind, by assuring him all he had apprehended was wholly at an end."

He stopt, and looked to see how Cecilia bore these words.

"It is all at an end, Sir;" said she, with firmness; "but I have not yet heard your commission; what, and from whom is that?"

"I am thoroughly satisfied it is unnecessary," he answered, "since the young man can but submit, and you can but give him up."

"But still, if there is a message, it is fit I should hear it."

"If you chuse it, so it is. I told Mr. Delvile whither I was coming, and I repeated to him his son's assurances. He was relieved, but not satisfied; he would not see him, and gave me for him a prohibition of extreme severity,—and to *you* he bid me say—"

"From *him*, then, is my message?"
cried

cried Cecilia, half frightened, and much disappointed.

"Yes," said he, understanding her immediately, "for the son, after giving me his first account, had the wisdom and forbearance not once to mention you."

"I am very glad," said she, with a mixture of admiration and regret, "to hear it. But, what, Sir, said Mr. Delville?"

"He bid me tell you that either *he*, or *you* must see his son never more."

"It was indeed unnecessary," cried she, colouring with resentment, "to send me such a message. I meant not to see him again, he meant not to desire it. I return him, however, no answer, and I will make him no promise; to Mrs. Delville alone I hold myself bound; to him, send what messages he may, I shall always hold myself free. But believe me, Dr. Lyster, if with his name, his son had inherited his character, his desire of our separation would be feeble, and trifling, compared with my own!"

"I am sorry, my good young lady," said he, "to have given you this disturbance; yet I admire your spirit, and doubt not but it will enable you to forget any little disappointment you may have suffered. And what, after all, have you to regret? Mortimer Delville is, indeed, a young man that any woman might wish to attach; but

every woman cannot have him, and you, of all women, have least reason to repine in missing him, for scarcely is there another man you may not chuse or reject at your pleasure."

Little as was the consolation Cecilia could draw from this speech, she was sensible it became not her situation to make complaints, and therefore, to end the conversation, she proposed calling in the Miss Charltons.

"No, no," said he, "I must step up again to Mrs. Delvile, and then be-gone. To-morrow morning I shall but call to see how she is, and leave some directions, and set off. Mr. Mortimer Delvile accompanies me back : but he means to return hither in a week, in order to travel with his mother to Bristol. Mean time, I purpose to bring about a reconciliation between him and his father, whose prejudices are more intractable than any man's I ever met with."

"It will be strange indeed," said Cecilia, "should a reconciliation *now* be difficult!"

"True; but it is long since he was young himself, and the softer affections he never was acquainted with, and only regards them in his son as derogatory to his whole race. However, if there were not some few such men, there would hardly be
... a family

a family in the kingdom that could count a great grand-father. I am not, I must own, of his humour myself, but I think it rather peculiarly stranger, than peculiarly worse than most other peoples; and how, for example, was that of *your* uncle a whit the better? He was just as fond of *his* name, as if, like Mr. Delvile, he could trace it from the time of the Saxons."

Cecilia strongly felt the truth of this observation, but not chusing to discuss it, made not any answer, and Dr. Lytber, after a few good-natured apologies, both for his friends the Delvile's and himself, went up stairs.

"What continual disturbance," cried she, when left alone, "keeps me thus forever from rest! no sooner is one wound closed, but another is opened; mortification constantly succeeds distress, and when my heart is spared, my pride is attacked, that not a moment of tranquility may ever be allowed me! Had the lowest of women won the affections of Mr. Delvile, could his father with less delicacy or less decency have acquainted her with his inflexible disapprobation? To send with so little ceremony a message so contemptuous and so preremptory!—but perhaps it is better, for had he, too, like Mrs. Delvile, joined kindness with rejection, I might still more keenly have felt the perverseness of my destiny."

C H A P. VII.

A P A R T I N G.

TH E next morning Dr. Lyfter called early, and having visited Mrs. Delvile, and again met the two gentlemen of the faculty in whose care she was to remain, he took his leave. But not without contriving first to speak a few words to Cecilia in private, in which he charged her to be careful of her health, and re-animate her spirits. "Don't suppose," said he, "that because I am a friend of the Delvile family, I am either blind to your merits, or to their foibles, far from it; but then why should they interfere with one another? Let them keep their prejudices, which, though different, are not worse than their neighbours, and do you retain your excellencies, and draw from them the happiness which they ought to give you. People reason and refine themselves into a thousand miseries, by chusing to settle that they can only be contented one way; whereas, there are fifty ways, if they would but look about them, that would commonly do as well."

"I believe, indeed, you are right," answered

swered Cecilia, " and I thank you for the admonition; I will do what I can towards studying your scheme of philosophy, and it is always one step to amendment, to be convinced that we want it."

" You are a sensible and charming girl," said Dr. Lyfter, " and Mr. Delvile, should he find a daughter-in-law descended in a right line from Egbert, first king of all England, won't be so well off as if he had satisfied himself with you. However, the old gentleman has a fair right, after all, to be pleased his own way, and let us blame him how we will, we shall find, upon sifting, it is for no other reason but because his humour happens to clash with our own."

" That, indeed," said Cecilia, smiling, " is a truth incontrovertable! and a truth to which, for the future, I will endeavour to give more weight. But will you permit me now to ask one question?—Can you tell me from whom, how, or when the intelligence which has caused all this disturbance——"

She hesitated, but, comprehending her readily, he answered " How they got at it, I never heard, for I never thought it worth while to enquire, as it is so generally known, that nobody I meet with seems ignorant of it."

This was another, and a cruel shock to
N 3 Cecilia,

Cecilia, and Dr. Lyfter, peceiving it, again attempted to comfort her. "That the affair is somewhat spread," said he, "is now not to be helped, and therefore little worth thinking of; every body will agree that the choice of both does honour to both, and nobody need be ashamed to be successor to either, whenever the course of things leads Mr. Mortimer and yourself to make another election. He wisely intends to go abroad, and will not return till he is his own man again. And as to you, my good young lady, what, after a short time given to vexation, need interrupt your happiness? You have the whole world before you, with youth, fortune, talents, beauty and independence; drive, therefore, from your head this unlucky affair, and remember there can hardly be a family in the kingdom, this one excepted, that will not rejoice in a connection with you."

He then good-humouredly shook hands with her, and went into his chaise.

Cecilia, though not slow in remarking the ease and philosophy with which every one can argue upon the calamities, and moralize upon the misconduct of others, had still the candour and good sense to see that there was reason in what he urged, and to resolve upon making the best use in her power

power of the hints for consolation she might draw from his discourse.

During the following week, she devoted herself almost wholly to Mrs. Delvile, sharing with the maid, whom she had brought with her from the Castle, the fatigue of nursing her, and leaving to the Miss Charltons the chief care of their grand-mother. For Mrs. Delvile appeared every hour more sensible of her attention, and more desirous of her presence, and though neither of them spoke, each was endeared to the other by the tender offices of friendship which were paid and received.

When this week was expired, Dr. Lyfter was prevailed upon to return again to Bury, in order to travel himself with Mrs. Delvile to Bristol. "Well," cried he, taking Cecilia by the first opportunity aside, "how are you? Have you studied my scheme of philosophy, as you promised me?"

"O yes," said she, "and made, I flatter myself, no little proficiency."

"You are a good girl," cried he, "a very extraordinary girl! I am sure you are; and upon my honour I pity poor Mortimer with all my soul! But he is a noble young fellow, and behaves with a courage and spirit that does me good to behold. To have obtained you, he would have moved heaven

and earth, but finding you out of his reach, he submits to his fate like a man."

Cecilia's eyes glistened at this speech; "Yes," said she, "he long since said 'tis suspense, 'tis hope, that make the misery of life,—for there the Passions have all power, and Reason has none. But when evils are irremediable, and we have neither resources to plan, nor castle-building to delude us, we find time for the cultivation of philosophy, and flatter ourselves, perhaps, that we have found inclination!"

"Why you have considered this matter very deeply," said he; "but I must not have you give way to these serious reflections. Thought, after all, has a cruel spite against happiness; I would have you, therefore, keep as much as you conveniently can, out of its company. Run about and divert yourself, 'tis all you have for it. The true art of happiness in this most whimsical world, seems nothing more nor less than this—Let those who have leisure, find employment, and those who have business, find leisure."

He then told her that Mr. Delville senior was much better, and no longer confined to his room: and that he had had the pleasure of seeing an entire reconciliation take place between him and his son, of whom
he

he was more fond and more proud than any other father in the universe.

“ Think of him, however, my dear young lady,” he continued, “ no more, for the matter I see is desperate: you must pardon my being a little officious, when I confess to you I could not help proposing to the old gentleman an expedient of my own; for as I could not drive you out of my head, I employed myself in thinking what might be done by way of accommodation. Now my scheme was really a very good one, only when people are prejudiced, all reasoning is thrown away upon them. . . I proposed sinking *both* your names, since they are so at variance with one another, and so adopting a third, by means of a title. But Mr. Delvile angrily declared, that though such a scheme might do very well for the needy Lord Ernolf, a Peer of twenty years, his own noble ancestors should never, by his consent, forfeit a name which so many centuries had rendered honourable. His son Mortimer, he added, must inevitably inherit the title of his grandfather, his uncle being old and unmarried; but yet he would rather see him a beggar, than lose his dearest hope that *Delvile*, Lord *Delvile*, would descend, both name and title, from generation unfulfilled and uninterrupted.”

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, "that such a proposal was made, and I earnestly entreat that none of any sort may be repeated."

"Well, well," said he, "I would not for the world do any mischief, but who would not have supposed such a proposal would have done good?"

"Mr. Mortimer," he then added, "is to meet us at ——— for he would not, he said, come again to this place, upon such terms as he was here last week, for the whole worth of the king's dominions."

The carriage was now ready, and Mrs. Delvile was prepared to depart. Cecilia approached to take leave of her, but Dr. Lytster following, said "No talking! no thanking! no compliments of any sort! I shall carry off my Patient without permitting one civil speech, and for all the rudeness I make her guilty of, I am willing to be responsible."

Cecilia would then have retreated, but Mrs. Delvile, holding out both her hands, said "To every thing else, Dr. Lytster, I am content to submit; but were I to die while uttering the words, I cannot leave this inestimable creature without first saying how much I love her, how I honour, and how I thank her! without entreating her to be careful of her health, and conjuring
ing

ing her to compleat the greatness of her conduct, by not suffering her spirits to sink from the exertion of her virtue. And now my love, God bless you!"

She then embraced her, and went on; Cecilia, at a motion of Dr. Lyfter's, forbearing to follow her.

"And thus," cried she, when they were gone, "thus ends all my connection with this family! which it seems as if I was only to have known for the purpose of affording a new proof of the insufficiency of situation to constitute happiness. Who looks not upon mine as the perfection of human felicity?—And so, perhaps, it is, for it may be that Felicity and Humanity are never permitted to come nearer."

And thus, in philosophic sadness, by reasoning upon the universality of misery, she restrained, at least, all violence of sorrow, though her spirits were dejected, and her heart was heavy.

But the next day brought with it some comfort that a little lightened her sadness; Mrs. Charlton, almost wholly recovered, was able to go down stairs, and Cecilia had at least the satisfaction of seeing an happy conclusion to an illness of which, with the utmost concern and regret, she considered herself as the cause. She attended her with the most unremitting assiduity, and being

really very thankful, endeavoured to appear happy, and flattered herself that, by continual effort, the appearance in a short time would become reality.

Mrs. Charlton retired early, and Cecilia accompanied her up stairs: and while she was with her, was informed that Mr. Monckton was in the parlour.

The various, afflicting, and uncommon scenes in which she had been engaged since she last saw him, had almost wholly driven him from her remembrance, or when at any time he recurred to it, it was only to attribute the discontinuance of his visits to the offence she had given him, in refusing to follow his advice by relinquishing her London expedition.

Full, therefore, of the mortifying transactions which had passed since their parting, and fearful of his enquiries into disgraces he had nearly foretold, she heard him announced with chagrin, and waited upon him in the most painful confusion.

Far different were the feelings of Mr. Monckton; he read in her countenance the dejection of disappointment, which impressed upon his heart the vivacity of hope: her evident shame was to him secret triumph, her ill-concealed sorrow revived all his expectations.

She hastily began a conversation by mentioning

tioning her debt to him, and apologising for not paying it the moment she was of age. He knew but too well how her time had been occupied, and assured her the delay was wholly immaterial.

He then led to an enquiry into the present situation of her affairs; but unable to endure a disquisition, which could only be productive of censure and mortification, she hastily stopt it; exclaiming, "Ask me not, I entreat you, Sir, any detail of what has passed,—the event has brought me sufferings that may well make blame dispensed with;—I acknowledge all your wisdom, I am sensible of my own error, but the affair is wholly dropt, and the unhappy connexion I was forming is broken off for-ever!"

Little now was Mr. Monckton's effort in repressing his further curiosity, and he started other subjects with readiness, gaiety and address. He mentioned Mrs. Charlton, for whom he had not the smallest regard; he talked to her of Mrs. Harrel, whose very existence was indifferent to him; and he spoke of their common acquaintance in the country, for not one of whom he would have grieved, if assured of meeting no more. His powers of conversation were enlivened by his hopes; and his exhilarated spirits made all subjects seem happy to him.

A

and welfare, will ever be the intelligence I shall most covet to receive. Yet I mean not to ask for it in return; to chance I will trust for information, and I only write now to say I shall write no more.

Too much for thanks is what I owe you, and what I think of you is beyond all power of expression. Do not, then, wish me ill, ill as I have seemed to merit of you, for my own heart is almost broken by the tyranny I have been compelled to practice upon yours.

And now let me bid a long adieu to you, my admirable Cecilia; you shall not be tormented with a useless correspondence, which can only awaken painful recollections, or give rise to yet more painful new anxieties. Fervently will I pray for the restoration of your happiness, to which nothing can so greatly contribute as that wise, that uniform command, so feminine, yet so dignified, you maintain over your passions; which often I have admired, though never so feelingly as at this conscious moment! when my own health is the sacrifice of emotions most fatally unrestrained.

Send to me no answer, even if you have the sweetness to wish it; every new proof of the generosity of your nature is to me but a new wound. Forget us, therefore, wholly, — alas! you have only known us

for sorrow! — forget us, dear and invaluable Cecilia! though ever, as you have nobly deserved, must you be fondly and gratefully remembered by

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

The attempted philosophy, and laboured resignation of Cecilia, this letter destroyed: the struggle was over, the apathy was at an end, and she burst into an agony of tears, which finding the vent they had long sought, now flowed unchecked down her cheeks, sad monitors of the weakness of reason opposed to the anguish of sorrow!

A letter at once so caressing, yet so absolute, forced its way to her heart, in spite of the fortitude she had flattered herself was its guard. In giving up Delville she was satisfied of the propriety of seeing him no more, and convinced that even to talk of him would be folly and imprudence; but to be told that for the future they must remain strangers to the existence of each other — there seemed in this a hardship, a rigour, that was insupportable.

“ Oh what,” cried she, “ is human nature! in its best state how imperfect! that a woman such as this, so noble in character, so elevated in sentiment, with heroism to sacrifice to her sense of duty the happiness
of

of a son, whom with joy she would die to serve, can herself be thus governed by prejudice, thus enslaved, thus subdued by opinion !” Yet never, even when miserable, unjust or irrational ; her grief was unmixed with anger, and her tears streamed not from resentment, but affliction. The situation of Mrs. Delville, however different, she considered to be as wretched as her own. She read, therefore, with sadness, but not bitterness, her farewell, and received not with disdain, but with gratitude, her sympathy. Yet though her indignation was not irritated, her sufferings were doubled, by a farewell so kind, yet so despotic, a sympathy so affectionate, yet so hopeless.

In this first indulgence of grief which she had granted to her disappointment, she was soon interrupted by a summons down stairs to a gentleman.

Unfit and unwilling to be seen, she begged that he might leave his name, and appoint a time for calling again.

Her maid brought for answer, that he believed his name was unknown to her, and desired to see her now, unless she was employed in some matter of moment.

She then put up her letter, and went into the parlour ; and there, to her infinite amazement, beheld Mr. Albany.

“ How

“ How little, Sir,” she cried, “ did I expect this pleasure.”

“ This pleasure, repeated he, “ do you call it? — what strange abuse of words! what causeless trifling with honesty! is language of no purpose but to wound the ear with untruths? is the gift of speech only granted us to pervert the use of understanding? I can give you no pleasure, I have no power to give it any one; you can give none to me — the whole world could not invest you with the means!”

“ Well, Sir, ” said Cecilia, who had little spirit to defend herself, “ I will not vindicate the expression, but of this I will unfeignedly assure you, I am at least as glad to see you just now, as I should be to see any body.”

“ Your eyes,” cried he, “ are red, your voice is inarticulate; — young, rich, and attractive, the world at your feet; that world yet untried, and its falsehood unknown, how have you thus found means to anticipate misery? which way have you uncovered the cauldron of human woes? Fatal and early anticipation! that cover once removed, can never be replaced; those woes, those boiling woes, will pour out upon you continually, and only when your heart ceases to beat, will their ebullition cease to torture you!”

“ Alas!”

“ Alas ! ” cried Cecilia, shuddering, “ how cruel, yet how true ! ”

“ Why went you,” cried he, “ to the cauldron ? it came not to you. Misery seeks not man, but man misery. He walks out in the sun, but stops not for a cloud ; confident, he pursues his way, till the storm which, gathering, he might have avoided, bursts over his devoted head. Scared and amazed, he repents his temerity ; he calls, but it is then too late ; he runs, but it is thunder which follows him ! Such is the presumption of man, such at once is the arrogance and shallowness of his nature ! And thou, simple and blind ! hast thou, too, followed whither Fancy has led thee, unheeding that thy career was too vehement for tranquility, nor missing that lovely companion of youth’s early innocence, till, adventurous and unthinking, thou hast lost her for ever ! ”

In the present weak state of Cecilia’s spirits, this attack was too much for her ; and the tears she had just, and with difficulty restrained, again forced their way down her cheeks, as she answered, “ It is but too true, — I have lost her for ever ! ”

“ Poor thing,” said he, while the rigour of his countenance was softened into the gentlest commiseration, “ so young ! — looking, too, so innocent ! — ’tis hard ! —

And

And is nothing left thee? no small remaining hope, to cheat, humanely cheat thy yet not wholly extinguished credulity?"

Cecilia wept without answering.

"Let me not," said he, "waste my compassion upon nothing; compassion is with me no effusion of affectation; tell me, then, if thou deservest it, or if thy misfortunes are imaginary, and thy grief is factitious?"

"Factitious," repeated she, "Good heaven!"

"Answer me, then, these questions, in which I shall comprise the only calamities for which sorrow has no controul, or none from human motives. Tell me, then, have you lost by death the friend of your bosom?"

"No!"

"Is your fortune dissipated by extravagance, and your power of relieving the distressed at an end?"

"No; the power and the will are I hope equally undiminished."

"O then, unhappy girl! have you been guilty of some vice, and hangs remorse thus heavy on your conscience?"

"No, no; thank heaven, to that misery, at least, I am a stranger!"

His countenance now again resumed its severity, and, in the sternest manner,

"Whence then," he said, "these tears?
and

and what is this caprice you dignify with the name of sorrow? — strange wantonness of indolence and luxury! perverse repining of ungrateful plenitude! — oh hadst thou known what *I* have suffered! — ”

“ Could I lessen what you have suffered,” said Cecilia, “ I should sincerely rejoice; but heavy indeed must be your affliction, if mine in its comparison deserves to be styled caprice! ”

“ Caprice! ” repeated he, “ ’tis joy! ’tis extacy compared with mine! — Thou hast not in licentiousness wasted thy inheritance! thou hast not by remorse barred each avenue to enjoyment! nor yet has the cold grave seized the beloved of thy soul! ”

“ Neither,” said Cecilia, “ I hope, are the evils you have yourself sustained so irremediable? ”

“ Yes, I have borne them all! — *have* borne? I bear them still; I shall bear them while I breathe! I may rue them, perhaps, yet longer.”

“ Good God! ” cried Cecilia, shrinking, “ what a world is this! how full of woe and wickedness! ”

“ Yet thou, too, canst complain,” cried he, “ though happy in life’s only blessing, Innocence! thou, too, canst murmur, tho’ stranger to death’s only terror, Sin! Oh yet if thy sorrow is unpolluted with guilt,
be

be regardless of all else, and rejoice in thy destiny!"

"But who," cried she, deeply sighing, "shall teach me such a lesson of joy, when all within rises to oppose it?"

"I," cried he, "will teach it thee, for I will tell thee my own sad story. Then wilt thou find how much happier is thy lot, then wilt thou raise thy head in thankful triumph."

"O no! triumph comes not so lightly! yet if you will venture to trust me with some account of yourself, I shall be glad to hear it, and much obliged by the communication."

"I will," he answered, "whatever I may suffer: to awaken thee from this dream of fancied sorrow, I will open all my wounds, and thou shalt probe them with fresh shame."

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia with quickness, "I will not hear you, if the relation will be so painful."

"Upon *me* this humanity is lost," said he, "since punishment and penitence alone give me comfort. I will tell thee, therefore, my crimes, that thou mayst know thy own felicity, lest, ignorant it means nothing but innocence, thou shouldst lose it, unconscious of its value. Listen then to me, and learn what Misery is! Guilt is alone
the

the basis of lasting unhappiness; — Guilt is the basis of mine, and therefore I am a wretch for ever! ”

Cecilia would again have declined hearing him, but he refused to be spared: and as her curiosity had long been excited to know something of his history, and the motives of his extraordinary conduct, she was glad to have it satisfied, and gave him the utmost attention.

“ I will not speak to you of my family,” said he; “ historical accuracy would little answer to either of us. I am a native of the West Indies, and I was early sent hither to be educated. While I was yet at the University, I saw, I adored, and I pursued the fairest flower that ever put forth its sweet buds, the softest heart that ever was broken by ill-usage! She was poor and unprotected, the daughter of a villager; she was untaught and unpretending, the child of simplicity! But fifteen summers had she bloomed, and her heart was an easy conquest; yet, once made mine, it resisted all allurements to infidelity. My fellow students attacked her; she was assaulted by all the arts of seduction; flattery, bribery, supplication, all were employed, yet all failed; she was wholly my own; and with sincerity so attractive, I determined to marry her in defiance of all worldly objections.

“ The

“ The sudden death of my father called me hastily to Jamaica ; I feared leaving this treasure unguarded, yet in decency could neither marry nor take her directly ; I pledged my faith, therefore, to return to her, as soon as I had settled my affairs, and I left to a bosom friend the inspection of her conduct in my absence.

“ To leave her was madness, — to trust in man was madness, — Oh hateful race ! how has the world been abhorrent to me since that time ! I have loathed the light of the sun, I have shrunk from the commerce of my fellow-creatures ; the voice of man I have detested, his sight I have abominated ! — but oh, more than all should I be abominated myself !

“ When I came to my fortune, intoxicated with sudden power, I forgot this fair blossom, I revelled in licentiousness and vice, and left it exposed and forlorn. Riot succeeded riot, till a fever, incurred by my own intemperance, first gave me time to think. Then was she revenged, for then first remorse was my portion : her image was brought back to my mind with frantic fondness, and bitterest contrition. The moment I recovered, I returned to England ; I flew to claim her, — but she was lost ! no one knew whither she was gone ; the wretch I had trusted pretended to know least of all ;

yet, after a furious search, I traced her to a cottage, where he had concealed her himself!

“ When she saw me, she screamed and would have flown; I stopt her, and told her I came faithfully and honourably to make her my wife:—her own faith and honour, though sullied, were not extinguished, for she instantly acknowledged the fatal tale of her undoing!

“ Did I recompense this ingenuousness? this unexampled, this beautiful sacrifice to intuitive integrity? Yes! with my curses!—I loaded her with execrations, I reviled her in language the most opprobrious, I insulted her even for her confession! I invoked all evil upon her from the bottom of my heart!—She knelt at my feet, she implored my forgiveness and compassion, she wept with the bitterness of despair,——and yet I spurned her from me!—Spurned?—let me not hide my shame! I barbarously struck her!——nor single was the blow!—it was doubled, it was reiterated!—Oh wretch, unyielding and unpitying! where shall hereafter be clemency for thee!—So fair a form! so young a culprit! so infamously seduced! so humbly penitent!

In this miserable condition, helpless and deplorable, mangled by these savage hands, and reviled by this inhuman tongue, I left

her, in search of the villain who had destroyed her: but, cowardly as treacherous, he had absconded. Repenting my fury, I hastened to her again; the fierceness of my cruelty shamed me when I grew calmer, the softness of her sorrow melted me upon recollection: I returned, therefore, to soothe her,—but again she was gone! terrified with expectation of insult, she hid herself from all my enquiries. I wandered in search of her two long years to no purpose, regardless of my affairs, and of all things but that pursuit. At length, I thought I saw her—in London, alone, and walking in the streets at midnight,—I fearfully followed her,—and followed her into an house of infamy!

“ The wretches by whom she was surrounded were noisy and drinking, they heeded me little,—but she saw and knew me at once! She did not speak, nor did I,—but in two moments she fainted and fell.

“ Yet did I not help her; the people took their own measures to recover her, and when she was again able to stand, would have removed her to another apartment.

“ I then went forward, and forcing them away from her with all the strength of desperation, I turned to the unhappy sinner, who to chance only seemed to leave what became of her, and cried, From this scene

of vice and horror let me yet rescue you! you look still unfit for such society, trust yourself, therefore, to me. I seized her hand, I drew, I almost dragged her away. She trembled, she could scarce totter, but neither consented nor refused, neither shed a tear, nor spoke a word, and her countenance presented a picture of affright, amazement, and horror.

“ I took her to a house in the country, each of us silent the whole way. I gave her an apartment and a female attendant, and ordered for her every convenience I could suggest. I stayed myself in the same house, but distracted with remorse for the guilt and ruin into which I had terrified her, I could not bear her sight.

“ In a few days her maid assured me the life she led must destroy her; that she would taste nothing but bread and water, never spoke, and never slept.

“ Alarmed by this account, I flew into her apartment; pride and resentment gave way to pity and fondness, and I besought her to take comfort. I spoke, however, to a statue, she replied not, nor seemed to hear me. I then humbled myself to her as in the days of her innocence and first power, supplicating her notice, entreating even her commiseration! all was to no purpose; she neither received nor repulsed me, and was
alike

alike inattentive to exhortation and to prayer.

“ Whole hours did I spend at her feet, vowing never to arise till she spoke to me,—all, all, in vain! she seemed deaf, mute, insensible; her face unmoved, a settled despair fixed in her eyes,—those eyes that had never looked at me but with dove-like softness and compliance!—She sat constantly in one chair, she never changed her dress, no persuasions could prevail with her to lie down, and at meals she just swallowed so much dry bread as might save her from dying for want of food.

“ What was the distraction of my soul, to find her bent upon this course to her last hour!—quick came that hour, but never will it be forgotten! rapidly it was gone, but eternally it will be remembered!

“ When she felt herself expiring, she acknowledged she had made a vow, upon entering the house, to live speechless and motionless, as a penance for her offences!

“ I kept her loved corpse till my own senses failed me, — it was then only torn from me, — and I have lost all recollection of three years of my existence!”

Cecilia shuddered at this hint, yet was not surprised by it; Mr. Gosport had acquainted her he had been formerly confined; and his flightiness, wildness, florid

language, and extraordinary way of life, had long led her to suspect his reason had been impaired.

"The scene to which my memory first leads me back," he continued, "is visiting her grave; solemnly upon it I returned her vow, though not by one of equal severity. To her poor remains did I pledge myself, that the day should never pass in which I would receive nourishment, nor the night come in which I would take rest, till I had done, or zealously attempted to do, some service to a fellow-creature.

"For this purpose have I wandered from city to city, from the town to the country, and from the rich to the poor. I go into every house where I can gain admittance, I admonish all who will hear me, I shame even those who will not. I seek the distressed where-ever they are hid, I follow the prosperous to beg a mite to serve them. I look for the Dissipated in public, where, amidst their licentiousness, I check them; I pursue the Unhappy in private, where I counsel and endeavour to assist them. My own power is small; my relations, during my sufferings, limiting me to an annuity; but there is no one I scruple to solicit, and by zeal I supply ability.

"Oh life of hardship and penance! laborious, toilsome, and restless! but I have
merited

merited no better, and I will not repine at it; I have vowed that I will endure it, and I will not be forsworn.

"One indulgence alone from time to time I allow myself, — 'tis Music! which has power to delight me even to rapture! it quiets all anxiety, it carries me out of myself, I forget through it every calamity, even the bitterest anguish.

"Now then, that thou hast heard me, tell me, hast *thou* cause of sorrow?"

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "this indeed is a Picture of Misery to make *my* lot seem all happiness!"

"Art thou thus open to conviction?" cried he, mildly; "and dost thou not fly the voice of truth! for truth and reproof are one."

"No, I would rather seek it; I feel myself wretched, however inadequate may be the cause; I wish to be more resigned, and if you can instruct me how, I shall thankfully attend to you."

"Oh yet uncorrupted creature!" cried he, "with joy will I be thy monitor, — joy long untasted! Many have I wished to serve, all, hitherto, have rejected my offices; too honest to flatter them, they had not the fortitude to listen to me; too low to advance them, they had not the virtue to bear with me. You alone have I yet found

pure enough not to fear inspection, and good enough to wish to be better. Yet words alone will not content me; I must also have deeds. Nor will your purse, however readily opened, suffice, you must give to me also your time and your thoughts; for money sent by others, to others only will afford relief; to lighten your own cares, you must distribute it yourself."

"You shall find me," said she, "a docile pupil, and most glad to be instructed how my existence may be useful."

"Happy then," cried he, "was the hour that brought me to this county; yet not in search of you did I come, but of the mutable and ill-fated Belfield. Erring, yet ingenious young man! what a lesson to the vanity of talents, to the gaiety, the brilliancy of wit, is the sight of that green fallen plant! not sapless by age, nor withered by disease, but destroyed by want of pruning, and bending, breaking by its own luxuriance!"

"And where, Sir, is he now?"

"Labouring wilfully in the field, with those who labour compulsatorily; such are we all by nature, discontented, perverse, and changeable; though all have not courage to appear so, and few, like Belfield, are worth watching when they do. He told me he was happy; I knew it could not be: but

but his employment was inoffensive, and I left him without reproach. In this neighbourhood I heard of you, and found your name was coupled with praise. I came to see if you deserved it; I have seen, and am satisfied."

"You are not, then, very difficult, for I have yet done nothing. How are we to begin these operations you propose? You have awakened me by them to an expectation of pleasure, which nothing else, I believe, could just now have given me."

"We will work," cried he, "together, till not a woe shall remain upon your mind. The blessings of the fatherless, the prayers of little children, shall heal all your wounds with balm of sweetest fragrance. When sad, they shall cheer, when complaining, they shall soothe you. We will go to their roofless houses, and see them repaired; we will exclude from their dwellings the inclemency of the weather; we will clothe them from cold, we will rescue them from hunger. The cries of distress shall be changed to notes of joy: your heart shall be enraptured, mine, too, shall revive—oh whither am I wandering? I am painting an Elysium! and while I idly speak, some fainting object dies for want of succour! Farewell; I will fly to the abodes of wretchedness, and come to you to-morrow

morrow to render them the abodes of happiness."

He then went away.

This singular visit was for Cecilia most fortunately timed: it almost surprised her out of her peculiar grief, by the view which it opened to her of general calamity; wild, flighty and imaginative as were his language and his counsels, their morality was striking, and their benevolence was affecting. Taught by him to compare her state with that of at least half her species, she began more candidly to weigh what was left with what was withdrawn, and found the balance in her favour. The plan he had presented to her of good works was consonant to her character and inclinations; and the active charity in which he proposed to engage her, re-animated her fallen hopes, though to far different subjects from those which had depressed them. Any scheme of worldly happiness would have sickened and disgusted her; but her mind was just in the situation to be impressed with elevated piety, and to adopt any design in which virtue humoured melancholy.

C H A P. IX.

A S H O C K.

CECILIA passed the rest of the day in fanciful projects of beneficence; she determined to wander with her romantic new ally whither-so-ever he would lead her, and to spare neither fortune, time, nor trouble, in seeking and relieving the distressed. Not all her attempted philosophy had calmed her mind like this plan; in merely refusing indulgence to grief, she had only locked it up in her heart, where eternally struggling for vent, she was almost overpowered by restraining it; but now her affliction had no longer her whole faculties to itself; the hope of doing good, the pleasure of easing pain, the intention of devoting her time to the service of the unhappy, once more delighted her imagination, — that source of promissory enjoyment, which though often obstructed, is never, in youth, exhausted.

She would not give Mrs. Charlton the unnecessary pain of hearing the letter with which she had been so much affected, but she told her of the visit of Albany, and pleased her with the account of their scheme.

At

At night, with less sadness than usual, she retired to rest. In her sleep she bestowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; she humbled the oppressor, she exalted the oppressed; slaves were raised to dignities, captives restored to liberty; beggars saw smiling abundance, and wretchedness was banished the world. From a cloud in which she was supported by angels, Cecilia beheld these wonders, and while enjoying the glorious illusion, she was awakened by her maid, with news that Mrs. Charlton was dying!

She started up, and, undressed, was running to her apartment, — when the maid, calling to stop her, confessed she was already dead!

She had made her exit in the night, but the time was not exactly known; her own maid, who slept in the room with her, going early to her bedside to enquire how she did, found her cold and motionless, and could only conclude that a paralytic stroke had taken her off.

Happily and in good time had Cecilia been somewhat recruited by one night of refreshing slumbers and flattering dreams, for the shock she now received promised her not soon another.

She lost in Mrs. Charlton a friend, whom nearly from her infancy she had considered

as a mother, and by whom she had been cherished with tenderness almost unequalled. She was not a woman of bright parts, or much cultivation, but her heart was excellent, and her disposition was amiable. Cecilia had known her longer than her memory could look back, though the earliest circumstances she could trace were kindnesses received from her. Since she had entered into life, and found the difficulty of the part she had to act, to this worthy old lady alone had she unboomed her secret cares. Though little assisted by her counsel, she was always certain of her sympathy; and while her own superior judgment directed her conduct, she had the relief of communicating her schemes, and weighing her perplexities, with a friend to whom nothing that concerned her was indifferent, and whose greatest wish and chief pleasure was the enjoyment of her conversation.

If left to herself, in the present period of her life, Mrs. Charlton had certainly not been the friend of her choice. The delicacy of her mind, and the refinement of her ideas, had now rendered her fastidious, and she would have looked out for elegancies and talents to which Mrs. Charlton had no pretensions: but those who live in the country have little power of selection; confined to a small circle, they must be content

tent with what it offers ; and however they may idolize extraordinary merit when they meet with it, they must not regard it as essential to friendship, for in their circumscribed rotation, whatever may be their discontent, they can make but little change.

Such had been the situation to which Mrs. Charlton and Mrs. Harrel owed the friendship of Cecilia. Greatly their superior in understanding and intelligence, had the candidates for her favour been more numerous, the election had not fallen upon either of them. But she became known to both before discrimination made her difficult, and when her enlightened mind discerned their deficiencies, they had already an interest in her affections, which made her see them with lenity : and though sometimes, perhaps, conscious she should not have chosen them from many, she adhered to them with sincerity, and would have changed them for none.

Mrs. Harrel, however, too weak for similar sentiments, forgot her when out of sight, and by the time they met again, was insensible to every thing but shew and dissipation. Cecilia, shocked and surprised, first grieved from disappointed affection, and then lost that affection in angry contempt. But her fondness for Mrs. Charlton had never known abatement, as the kindness which had excited it had never
known

known allay. She had loved her first from childish gratitude; but that love, strengthened and confirmed by confidential intercourse, was now as sincere and affectionate as if it had originated from sympathetic admiration. Her loss, therefore, was felt with the utmost severity, and neither seeing nor knowing any means of replacing it, she considered it as irreparable, and mourned it with bitterness.

When the first surprize of this cruel stroke was somewhat lessened, she sent an express to Mr. Monckton with the news, and entreated to see him immediately. He came without delay, and she begged his counsel what step she ought herself to take in consequence of this event. Her own house was still unprepared for her; she had of late neglected to hasten the workmen, and almost forgotten her intention of entering it. It was necessary, however, to change her abode immediately; she was no longer in the house of Mrs. Charlton, but of her grand-daughters and co-heiresses, each of whom she disliked, and upon neither of whom she had any claim.

Mr. Monckton then, with the quickness of a man who utters a thought at the very moment of its projection, mentioned a scheme upon which during his whole ride he had been ruminating; which was that she would instantly remove to his house,
and

and remain there till settled to her satisfaction.

Cecilia objected her little right of surprising Lady Margaret; but, without waiting to discuss it, lest new objections should arise, he quitted her, to fetch himself from her ladyship an invitation he meant to insist upon her sending.

Cecilia, though heartily disliking this plan, knew not at present what better to adopt, and thought any thing preferable to to going again to Mrs. Harrel, since that only could be done by feeding the anxiety of Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Monckton soon returned with a message of his own fabrication; for his lady, though obliged to receive whom he pleased, took care to guard inviolate the independence of speech, fullenly persevering in refusing to say any thing, or perversely saying only what he least wished to hear.

Cecilia then took a hasty leave of Miss Charltons, who, little affected by what they had lost, and eager to examine what they had gained, parted from her gladly, and, with a heavy heart and weeping eyes, borrowed for the last time the carriage of her late worthy old friend, and for-ever quitting her hospitable house, sorrowfully set out for the Grove.

